# Risk-Sensitive Optimization in Reinforcement Learning

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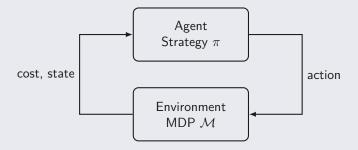
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## Ideas Behind Reinforcement Learning

#### RL

- Idea: Collect data via an interactive process over many time steps
- Goal: Find a behavior which minimizes a cost



• The environment is often represented as a Markov decision process

## Markov Decision Process

#### **MDP**

A Markov decision process is a tuple  $\mathcal{M} = (\mathcal{S}, \mathcal{A}, \mathcal{C}, P, \pi, \gamma)$ , where

- S State space
  - Information available from the environment
- A Action space
  - Action taken at a certain time
- $C(s, a) \in [-C_{max}, C_{max}]$  State-action dependent cost function
  - Cost when being in state s and action a is taken
- $P(s_0), P(s' \mid s, a)$  Transition probability distribution
  - ullet Probability of being in state s' if in state s and action a is taken
- $\pi(a \mid s)$  Policy
  - Probability of taking action a when being in state s
- $\gamma \in (0,1)$  Discount factor

## Risk-sensitive RL

One trajectory of length T from  $\mathcal M$  is denoted by

$$\tau = (s_0, a_0, s_1, a_1, \dots, s_{T-1}, a_{T-1}, s_T).$$

Let Z be the cumulative discounted cost of a trajectory induced by  ${\mathcal M}$  with a policy  $\pi$ 

$$Z(\tau) = C(a_0, s_0) + \gamma C(a_1, s_1) + \cdots + \gamma^T C(s_T).$$

Standard RL deals with a risk-neutral objective function of the cost Z

$$\min_{\pi} \mathbb{E}\left[Z(\tau)\right]$$
.

#### Optimization problem

Risk-sensitive RL considers problems in which the objective involves a risk measure  $\rho$ :

$$\min_{\pi} \frac{\rho}{\rho}(Z(\tau))$$
 or  $\min_{\pi} \mathbb{E}[Z(\tau)]$  subj. to  $\frac{\rho}{\rho}(Z(\tau)) \leq Z^*$ .

## Risk-sensitive RL

- Risk-awareness provides strategies that are more robust to the environment
  - Autonomous car that accounts for environmental uncertainties, investing strategy that avoids losses of large amount of money, etc.
- Assumption of risk-aversion (as opposed to risk-neutrality) raises the complexity
- Risk sensitive criteria often lead to non-standard MDPs
  - Extend the state space to recover an ordinary MDP for CVaR optimization (Chow et al., 2015)
- Problem cannot be solved in a straightforward way by using Bellman equation, time-inconsistency issue
  - Adapt theory of risk measures to dynamic programming models with Markov risk measures (Ruszczyński, 2010)

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## Optimization with Coherent Risk Measures

# Policy Gradient for Coherent Risk Measures

A. Tamar, Y. Chow, M. Ghavamzadeh, S. Mannor, NeurIPS 2015.

- A gradient estimation algorithm for general coherent risk measures
  - Using sampling and convex programming
  - · Consistency result provided
- A policy gradient theorem for Markov coherent risk measures
  - Dynamic programming approach to obtain a Bellman equation
  - Actor-critic algorithm for learning optimal policies

### Coherent Risk Measures

#### Coherence

Consider two random variables X and Y. A risk measure  $\rho$  is said to be **coherent** (Artzner et al., 1999) if

- (Convexity)  $\rho(\lambda X + (1 \lambda)Y) = \lambda \rho(X) + (1 \lambda)\rho(Y)$ ,  $\forall \lambda \in [0, 1]$ 
  - Diversification is favored by the risk measure.
- (Monotonicity) If  $X \leq Y$ , then  $\rho(X) \leq \rho(Y)$ 
  - A portfolio with a higher cost for every scenario is indeed riskier.
- (Translation invariance) For all  $a \in \mathbb{R}$ ,  $\rho(X + a) = \rho(X) + a$ 
  - The deterministic part of a portfolio does not contribute to its risk.
- (Positive homogeneity) If  $\lambda \geq 0$ , then  $\rho(\lambda X) = \lambda \rho(X)$ 
  - The risk is proportional to the size of the portfolio.

# **Duality Result**

#### Representation Theorem

(Shapiro et al., 2014) A risk measure  $\rho$  is coherent iff. there exists a convex, bounded and closed set  $\mathcal{U} \in \{P: \int_{\omega \in \Omega} P(\omega) = 1, P \geq 0\}$  called **risk envelope** such that

$$\rho(X) = \max_{\xi : \xi P \in \mathcal{U}(P)} \ \mathbb{E}^{\xi} [X] = \max_{\xi : \xi P \in \mathcal{U}(P)} \ \sum_{\omega \in \Omega} \xi(\omega) P(\omega) X(\omega).$$

In (Tamar et al., 2015), they assume that

$$egin{aligned} \mathcal{U}(P) &= \left\{ \xi P \, : \, \sum_{\omega \in \Omega} \xi(\omega) P(\omega) = 1, \, \, \xi \geq 0, \\ &\qquad \qquad g_e(\xi,P) = 0, orall e \in \mathcal{E}, \, \, f_i(\xi,P) \leq 0, orall i \in \mathcal{I} 
ight\} \end{aligned}$$

where  $g_e(\xi, P)$  are affine functions w.r.t.  $\xi$ ,  $f_i(\xi, P)$  are convex functions w.r.t.  $\xi$ , and  $\mathcal{E}$  (resp.  $\mathcal{I}$ ) denotes the set of equality (resp. inequality)

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### Static Risk Problem

All actions are chosen according to a policy  $\pi_{\theta}(\cdot|s)$ , parameterized by  $\theta$ . For a coherent risk measure  $\rho$ , the problem to solve is

$$\min_{\theta} \rho(Z) = \min_{\theta} \max_{\xi : \xi P_{\theta} \in \mathcal{U}(P_{\theta})} \sum_{\omega \in \Omega} \xi(\omega) P_{\theta}(\omega) Z(\omega)$$

Z could be the cumulative discounted cost of a trajectory induced by  ${\cal M}$  with a policy  $\pi_{\theta}$ 

• Use the assumption on  $\mathcal{U}$  to write the Lagrangian function of  $\rho(Z)$ 

$$L_{\theta}(\xi, \lambda^{P}, \lambda^{\mathcal{E}}, \lambda^{\mathcal{I}}) = \underbrace{\sum_{\omega \in \Omega} \xi(\omega) P_{\theta}(\omega) Z(\omega)}_{\text{risk measure}} - \lambda^{P} \left( \sum_{\omega \in \Omega} \xi(\omega) P_{\theta}(\omega) - 1 \right) - \underbrace{\sum_{e \in \mathcal{E}} \left( \lambda^{\mathcal{E}}(e) g_{e}(\xi, P_{\theta}) \right)}_{\text{equality constr. } \mathcal{E}} - \underbrace{\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \left( \lambda^{\mathcal{I}}(i) f_{i}(\xi, P_{\theta}) \right)}_{\text{inequality constr. } \mathcal{I}}$$

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equality constr.  $\mathcal{E}$ 
inequality constr.  $\mathcal{I}$ 

#### Static Risk Problem

#### Gradient formula (static)

For any saddle point  $(\xi^*, \lambda^{*,P}, \lambda^{*,\mathcal{E}}, \lambda^{*,\mathcal{I}})$  of  $L_{\theta}$ , we have

$$\begin{split} \nabla_{\theta} \rho(Z) &= \mathbb{E}^{\xi^*} \left[ \nabla_{\theta} \log P_{\theta}(\omega) \left( Z - \lambda^{*,P} \right) \right] \\ &- \underbrace{\sum_{e \in \mathcal{E}} \left( \lambda^{*,\mathcal{E}}(e) \nabla_{\theta} g_e(\xi^*, P_{\theta}) \right)}_{\text{equality constr. } \mathcal{E}} - \underbrace{\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \left( \lambda^{*,\mathcal{I}}(i) \nabla_{\theta} f_i(\xi^*, P_{\theta}) \right)}_{\text{inequality constr. } \mathcal{I}}. \end{split}$$

- Saddle-point known analytically: Sampling-based estimator
- Saddle-point not known analytically: Convex optimization step, sampling step

# Examples

#### Expectation

The expectation is a coherent risk measure, since

$$\rho_{E}(Z) = \mathbb{E}[Z] = \max_{\xi : \xi \in \mathcal{U}} \mathbb{E}^{\xi}[Z],$$

where its risk envelope is

$$\mathcal{U} = \{ \xi \mid \xi \equiv 1 \}.$$

Any saddle point  $(\xi^*, \lambda^{*,P})$  satisfies  $\xi^* = 1$  and  $\lambda^{*,P} = 0$ . Therefore,

$$\nabla_{\theta} \rho_{E}(Z) = \mathbb{E}\left[Z \, \nabla_{\theta} \log P_{\theta}(\omega)\right].$$

We recover the result for a risk-neutral objective (Sutton and Barto, 2018)

# **Examples**

#### Conditional value-at-risk

The conditional value-at-risk (Rockafellar et al., 2000) is

$$\begin{split} \rho_{\mathsf{CVaR}}(Z,\alpha) &= \inf_{t \in \mathbb{R}} \left\{ t + \alpha^{-1} \, \mathbb{E} \left[ (Z - t)_{+} \right] \right\} \\ &= \max_{\xi \,:\, \xi P_{\theta} \in \mathcal{U}(P_{\theta})} \, \mathbb{E}^{\xi} \left[ Z \right] \end{split}$$

where

$$\mathcal{U} = \left\{ \xi P \,\middle|\, \xi \in \left[0, \frac{1}{lpha}\right], \sum_{\omega \in \Omega} \xi(\omega) P(\omega) = 1 
ight\}.$$

Any saddle point  $(\xi^*, \lambda^{*,P})$  satisfies  $\xi^*(\omega) = \frac{1}{\alpha}$  if  $Z(\omega) > \lambda^{*,P}$  and  $\xi^*(\omega) = 0$  otherwise, where  $\lambda^{*,P}$  is any  $(1-\alpha)$ -quantile of Z. Therefore we obtain

$$abla_{ heta} 
ho_{\mathsf{CVaR}}(Z, lpha) = \mathbb{E}\left[ \left( Z - q_{lpha} \right) 
abla_{ heta} \log P_{ heta}(\omega) \mid Z > q_{lpha} 
ight].$$

All spectral risk measures (Acerbi, 2002) are also coherent risk measures.

## Policy Gradient Algorithm

How to compute  $\nabla_{\theta} \log P_{\theta}(\omega)$  in the gradient formula?

$$egin{aligned} 
abla_{ heta} 
ho_{ extsf{E}}(Z) &= \mathbb{E}\left[Z \, 
abla_{ heta} \log P_{ heta}(\omega)
ight] \ 
abla_{ heta} 
ho_{ extsf{CVaR}}(Z, lpha) &= \mathbb{E}\left[(Z - q_{lpha}) \, 
abla_{ heta} \log P_{ heta}(\omega) \mid Z > q_{lpha}
ight]. \end{aligned}$$

The gradient of the log-probability of a trajectory is

$$egin{aligned} 
abla_{ heta} \log \left( P( au | \pi_{ heta}) 
ight) &= 
abla_{ heta} \log \left( p(s_0) \prod_{t=0}^{T-1} \pi_{ heta}(a_t | s_t) P(s_{t+1} | a_t, s_t) 
ight) \ &= \sum_{t=0}^{T-1} 
abla_{ heta} \log \left( \pi_{ heta}(a_t | s_t) 
ight). \end{aligned}$$

•  $\nabla_{\theta} \log P_{\theta}$  depends only on  $\nabla_{\theta} \log \pi_{\theta}$ .

# Policy Gradient Algorithm

$$\theta^* = \operatorname*{arg\,min}_{\theta} J(\theta) = \operatorname*{arg\,min}_{\theta} \mathbb{E}[Z]$$

```
Input: Policy to improve \pi_{\theta};
1 Initialize number of samples N and learning rates \{\nu_m\}_m;
  foreach iteration m = 1, ..., M do
         Generate \tau_1, \ldots, \tau_N trajectories from the MDP \mathcal{M} under \pi_{\theta};
3
         foreach trajectory n = 1, ..., N do
4
              Compute \nabla_{\theta} \log \pi_{\theta}(a_t|x_t) for each transition of \tau_n;
5
              Set J_n \leftarrow Z(\tau_n) \sum_{t=0}^{T_n} \nabla_{\theta} \log \pi_{\theta}(a_t|x_t);
                                                                              (Policy gradient thm)
6
        Calculate \widehat{\nabla J} \leftarrow \frac{1}{N} \sum_{n=1}^{N} J_n;
7
                                                                              (Sampling-based estimator)
         Update \theta \leftarrow \theta - \nu_m \widehat{\nabla J}:
8
                                                                                         (Gradient descent)
   Output: \theta \approx \theta^*
```

# Policy Gradient Algorithm

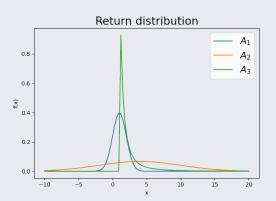
$$\theta^* = \underset{\theta}{\arg\min} J(\theta) = \underset{\theta}{\arg\min} \rho_{CVaR}(Z, \alpha)$$

```
Input: Policy to improve \pi_{\theta};
1 Initialize number of samples N and learning rates \{\nu_m\}_m;
  foreach iteration m = 1, ..., M do
         Generate 	au_1, \ldots, 	au_N trajectories from the MDP \mathcal M under \pi_{	heta} ;
3
         Estimate \hat{q}_{\alpha}, the quantile of Z(\tau_1), \ldots, Z(\tau_N);
4
         foreach trajectory n = 1, ..., N do
5
               Compute \nabla_{\theta} \log \pi_{\theta}(a_t|x_t) for each transition of \tau_n;
6
               Set J_n \leftarrow (Z(\tau_n) - \hat{q}_\alpha) \sum_{t=0}^{T_n} \nabla_{\theta} \log \pi_{\theta}(a_t|x_t); (Gradient formula)
7
         Calculate \widehat{\nabla J} \leftarrow \text{ average of } J_n \text{ s.t. } Z(\tau_n) > \hat{q}_{\alpha};
8
                                                                                                      (Estimator)
         Update \theta \leftarrow \theta - \nu_m \widehat{\nabla J}:
9
                                                                                            (Gradient descent)
   Output: \theta \approx \theta^*
```

#### Illustration

Three risky assets with the same initial price but different returns Z:

- $A_1 Z \sim \mathcal{N}(\mu = 1, \sigma = 1)$
- $A_2 Z \sim \mathcal{N}(\mu = 4, \sigma = 6)$
- $A_3$   $Z\sim \mathsf{Pareto}(lpha=1.5)$  (i.e.  $\mathbb{E}[Z]=3$  and  $\mathsf{Var}[Z]=\infty)$



# Discrete Action Space - Policies

One time step per trajectory, and the agent's policy is characterized by

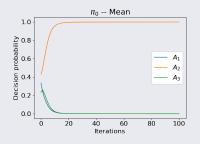
$$\pi_{ heta}(A_i) = \mathbb{P}\left[ ext{Agent invests in } A_i 
ight] = rac{e^{ heta_i}}{\sum_k e^{ heta_k}}, \quad i = 1, 2, 3.$$

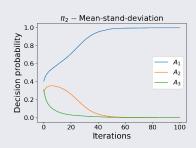
Policies are trained with different objective functions, for agent's risk preferences

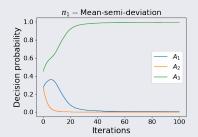
- Policy  $\pi^0$ :  $\theta^* = \arg\min_{\theta} \mathbb{E}[Z]$
- Policy  $\pi^1$ :  $\theta^* = \arg\min_{\theta} \mathbb{E}[Z] + \mathbb{SD}[Z]$
- Policy  $\pi^2$ :  $\theta^* = \arg\min_{\theta} \mathbb{E}[Z] + \sqrt{\text{Var}[Z]}$
- Policy  $\pi^3$ :  $\theta^* = \arg \min_{\theta} \text{CVaR}_{0.1}[Z]$

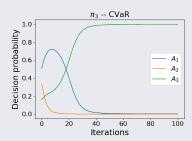
Policy  $\pi^2$  was trained using the algorithm from (Tamar et al., 2012) for policy gradient with variance related risk criteria.

# Discrete Action Space - Results









# Discrete Action Space - Results

- $\pi^0$  favors the asset  $A_2$ 
  - Expected behavior since  $A_2$  has the highest mean return and the policy is risk-neutral, i.e.  $\max_{\theta} \mathbb{E}[Z]$
- $\pi^1$  and  $\pi^3$ , which optimize coherent risk measures, favor  $A_3$ 
  - Risk-averse policies choose the Pareto distributed returns, because it has a lower downside
  - Lower mean return, but less risky
- $\pi^2$  favors the asset  $A_1$ 
  - Risk-averse policy that controls for the variance, not coherent
  - It does not choose A<sub>3</sub> because of the heavy upper-tail
  - Counter-intuitive since we avert high returns

# Continuous Action Space - Policies

Now suppose the agent can invest a portion of its wealth in each asset, and the agent's policy is characterized by

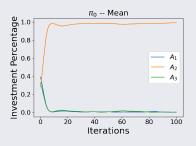
$$\pi_{\theta}(x) = \mathbb{P}\left[\text{Agent invests } x_i \text{ in } A_i, i = 1, 2, 3\right] \sim \text{Dirichlet}\left(\theta_1, \theta_2, \theta_3\right).$$

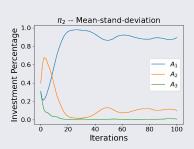
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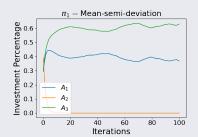
- Policy  $\pi^0$ :  $\theta^* = \arg\min_{\theta} \mathbb{E}[Z]$
- Policy  $\pi^1$ :  $\theta^* = \arg\min_{\theta} \mathbb{E}[Z] + \mathbb{SD}[Z]$
- Policy  $\pi^2$ :  $\theta^* = \arg\min_{\theta} \mathbb{E}[Z] + \sqrt{\text{Var}[Z]}$
- Policy  $\pi^3$ :  $\theta^* = \arg\min_{\theta} \text{CVaR}_{0.1}[Z]$

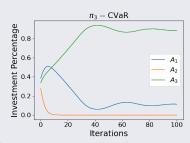
Policy  $\pi^2$  was trained using the algorithm from (Tamar et al., 2012) for policy gradient with variance related risk criteria.

## Continuous Action Space - Results









#### Markov coherent risk measure

A Markov coherent risk measure (Ruszczyński, 2010) is a dynamic risk measure

$$\rho_{\infty}(\mathcal{M}) = C(s_0) + \gamma \rho \left( C(s_1) + \gamma \rho \left( C(s_2) + \cdots + \gamma \rho \left( C(s_T) + \cdots \right) \cdots \right) \right)$$

with a (static) coherent risk measure  $\rho$ , and a trajectory drawn from  $\mathcal{M}$  under the policy  $\pi_{\theta}$ .

- Dynamic risk measure: how to evaluate risk of future costs from today's perspective
- Markov risk measure:  $\rho$  is not allowed to depend on the whole past
- Time-consistent: if Z will be at least as good as W at time  $t_2$ , and they are identical between  $t_1$  and  $t_2$ , then Z should not be worse than W at time  $t_1$

The dynamic problem to solve is  $\min_{\theta} \rho_{\infty}(\mathcal{M})$ . Define the value function, the risk when starting in state s, as

$$V_{\theta}(s) = \rho_{\infty}(\mathcal{M} \mid s_0 = s).$$

#### Risk-sensitive Bellman equation

(Ruszczyński, 2010) With a dynamic programming decomposition, it can be shown that the value function is the unique solution to

$$V_{\theta}(s) = C(s) + \gamma \max_{\xi P_{\theta}(\cdot | s) \in \mathcal{U}(s, P_{\theta}(\cdot | s))} \mathbb{E}^{\xi} \left[ V_{\theta}(s') \right].$$

- They extended the policy gradient theorem by developing a formula for  $\nabla_{\theta} V_{\theta}(s)$
- Used to develop an actor-critic sampling-based algorithm
- Used to construct a Q-learning style algorithm for risk-aware MDPs (Huang and Haskell, 2017)

#### Conclusion

- Sequential decision making modeled as MDPs in order to optimize a policy that achieves good risk performance
  - Results generalized to the whole class of coherent risk measures
  - Appropriate risk measure that suits agent's risk preference
- Two policy gradient formulas and algorithms
  - Static risk problem: Sampling-based estimator
  - Dynamic risk problem: Actor-critic style algorithm
- Future directions
  - Dynamic risk problem for a finite-time horizon?
  - Multi-agent system framework for Markov coherent risk measures?
  - Extend it to a broader class of risk measures, e.g. distortion risk measures?

## Acknowledgments and References

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# Examples

#### Mean-semi-deviation

Denote the semi-deviation by

$$\mathbb{SD}[Z] = (\mathbb{E}\left[(Z - \mathbb{E}[Z])_+^2\right])^{1/2}.$$

The risk of The mean-semi-deviation is a coherent risk measure

$$\rho_{\mathbb{SD}}(Z,\alpha) = \mathbb{E}[Z] + \alpha \mathbb{SD}[Z],$$

and its gradient is given by

$$\nabla_{\theta} \mathbb{SD}[Z] = \frac{\mathbb{E}\left[(Z - \mathbb{E}[Z])_{+} \times (\nabla_{\theta} \log P(\omega)(Z - \mathbb{E}[Z]) - \nabla_{\theta} \mathbb{E}[Z])\right]}{\mathbb{SD}(Z)}$$

Consider a filtration  $\{\mathcal{F}_t\}_t$ , and denote the spaces  $\mathcal{L}_t = \mathcal{L}_p(\Omega, \mathcal{F}_t, P)$  and  $\mathcal{L}_{t,T} = \mathcal{L}_t \times \ldots \times \mathcal{L}_T$ .

#### Dynamic risk measure

A dynamic risk measure (Ruszczyński, 2010) is a sequence  $\{\rho_{t,T}\}_{t=1,...,T}, \ \rho_{t,T}: \mathcal{L}_{t,T} \to \mathcal{L}_t \ \text{where} \ \rho_{t,T}(Z) \leq \rho_{t,T}(W), \ \forall \ Z \leq W.$ 

• How to evaluate the risk of future costs  $Z_t, \ldots, Z_T$  at time t

#### Time-consistency

 $\{\rho_{t,T}\}_t$  is said to be **time-consistent** iff. for any  $1 \le t_1 < t_2 \le T$  and any sequence  $Z, W \in \mathcal{L}_{t_1,T}$ , we have

$$Z_k = W_k, \, \forall k = t_1, \dots, t_2 \, \text{ and } \, \rho_{t_2,T}(Z_{t_2}, \dots, Z_T) \leq \rho_{t_2,T}(W_{t_2}, \dots, W_T)$$
 implies that  $\rho_{t_1,T}(Z_{t_1}, \dots, Z_T) \leq \rho_{t_1,T}(W_{t_1}, \dots, W_T)$ .

• If Z will be at least as good as W at time  $t_2$ , and they are identical between  $t_1$  and  $t_2$ , then Z should not be worse than W at time  $t_1$ 

Consider a filtration  $\{\mathcal{F}_t\}_t$ , and denote the spaces  $\mathcal{L}_t = \mathcal{L}_p(\Omega, \mathcal{F}_t, P)$  and  $\mathcal{L}_{t,T} = \mathcal{L}_t \times \ldots \times \mathcal{L}_T$ .

#### Dynamic risk measure

A dynamic risk measure (Ruszczyński, 2010) is a sequence  $\{\rho_{t,T}\}_{t=1,\dots,T}, \ \rho_{t,T}: \mathcal{L}_{t,T} \to \mathcal{L}_t \ \text{where} \ \rho_{t,T}(Z) \leq \rho_{t,T}(W), \ \forall \ Z \leq W.$ 

• How to evaluate the risk of future costs  $Z_t, \ldots, Z_T$  at time t

#### Time-consistency

 $\{\rho_{t,T}\}_t$  is said to be **time-consistent** iff. for any  $1 \le t_1 < t_2 \le T$  and any sequence  $Z, W \in \mathcal{L}_{t_1,T}$ , we have

$$Z_k = W_k, \, \forall k = t_1, \dots, t_2 \, \text{ and } \, \rho_{t_2,T}(Z_{t_2}, \dots, Z_T) \leq \rho_{t_2,T}(W_{t_2}, \dots, W_T)$$
 implies that  $\rho_{t_1,T}(Z_{t_1}, \dots, Z_T) \leq \rho_{t_1,T}(W_{t_1}, \dots, W_T)$ .

• If Z will be at least as good as W at time  $t_2$ , and they are identical between  $t_1$  and  $t_2$ , then Z should not be worse than W at time  $t_1$ 

#### Recursive relationship

If  $\{\rho_{t,T}\}_t$  satisfies  $\rho_{t,T}(0,\ldots,0)=0$  and

$$\rho_{t,T}(Z_t, Z_{t+1}, \dots, Z_T) = Z_t + \rho_{t,T}(0, Z_{t+1}, \dots, Z_T),$$

then time-consistency is equivalent to

$$\rho_{t_1,T}(Z_{t_1},\ldots,Z_{t_2},\ldots,Z_T)=\rho_{t_1,t_2}(Z_{t_1},\ldots,Z_{t_2-1},\rho_{t_2,T}(Z_{t_2},\ldots,Z_T)).$$

We obtain the following relation

$$\rho_{t,T}(Z_t,...,Z_T) = Z_t + \rho_t (Z_{t+1} + \rho_{t+1} (Z_{t+2} + \cdots + \rho_T (Z_T) \cdots))$$

where  $ho_t:\mathcal{L}_{t+1} o\mathcal{L}_t$  are one-step conditional risk measures such that

$$\rho_t(Z_{t+1}) = \rho_{t,t+1}(0, Z_{t+1})$$

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We obtain the following relation

$$\rho_{t,T}(Z_t,\ldots,Z_T)=Z_t+\rho_t\left(Z_{t+1}+\rho_{t+1}\left(Z_{t+2}+\cdots+\rho_T\left(Z_T\right)\cdots\right)\right),$$

where  $ho_t:\mathcal{L}_{t+1} o\mathcal{L}_t$  are one-step conditional risk measures such that

$$\rho_t(Z_{t+1}) = \rho_{t,t+1}(0, Z_{t+1}).$$

Using Markov coherent risk measures, define

$$\rho_{\infty}(\mathcal{M}) = C(s_0) + \gamma \rho \left( C(s_1) + \gamma \rho \left( C(s_2) + \cdots + \gamma \rho \left( C(s_T) + \cdots \right) \cdots \right) \right),$$

with a (static) coherent risk measure  $\rho$ , and a trajectory drawn from  $\mathcal{M}$  under the policy  $\pi_{\theta}$ . The dynamic problem to solve is  $\min_{\theta} \rho_{\infty}(\mathcal{M})$ .

#### Risk-sensitive Bellman equation

With a dynamic programming decomposition, it can be shown that the value function is the unique solution to

$$V_{\theta}(s) = C(s) + \gamma \max_{\xi P_{\theta}(\cdot|s) \in \mathcal{U}(s, P_{\theta}(\cdot|s))} \mathbb{E}^{\xi} \left[ V_{\theta}(s') \right],$$

where 
$$V_{\theta}(s) = \rho_{\infty}(\mathcal{M} \mid s_0 = s)$$
.

- Used to develop an actor-critic sampling-based algorithm
- Used to construct a Q-learning style algorithm for risk-aware MDPs (Huang and Haskell, 2017)

### Gradient formula (dynamic)

Let

$$L_{\theta}(\xi, \lambda^{P}, \lambda^{\mathcal{E}}, \lambda^{\mathcal{I}}) = \sum_{s' \in \mathcal{S}} \xi(s') P_{\theta}(s'|s) V_{\theta}(s') - \lambda^{P} \sum_{s' \in \mathcal{S}} \xi(s') P_{\theta}(s'|s) - 1$$

$$- \sum_{e \in \mathcal{E}} \left( \lambda^{\mathcal{E}}(e) g_{e}(\xi, P_{\theta}) \right) - \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \left( \lambda^{\mathcal{I}}(i) f_{i}(\xi, P_{\theta}) \right).$$
equality constr.  $\mathcal{E}$ 
inequality constr.  $\mathcal{I}$ 

$$\begin{split} \nabla_{\theta} V_{\theta}(s) &= \mathbb{E}^{\xi_{s}^{*}} \left[ \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \gamma^{t} \nabla_{\theta} \log(\pi_{\theta}(a_{t}|s_{t})) h_{\theta}(s_{t}, a_{t}) \middle| s_{0} = s \right] \\ h_{\theta}(s, a) &= C(s) + \sum_{s' \in \mathcal{S}} P(s'|s, a) \xi_{s}^{*}(s') \left[ \gamma V_{\theta}(s') - \lambda_{s}^{*, P} - \sum_{e \in \mathcal{E}} \left( \lambda_{s}^{*, \mathcal{E}}(e) \frac{\mathsf{d}g_{e}(\xi_{s}^{*}, p)}{\mathsf{d}p(s')} \right) - \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \left( \lambda_{s}^{*, \mathcal{I}}(i) \frac{\mathsf{d}f_{i}(\xi_{s}^{*}, p)}{\mathsf{d}p(s')} \right) \right] \\ &= \underbrace{ \left[ \sum_{e \in \mathcal{E}} \left( \lambda_{s}^{*, \mathcal{E}}(e) \frac{\mathsf{d}g_{e}(\xi_{s}^{*}, p)}{\mathsf{d}p(s')} \right) - \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \left( \lambda_{s}^{*, \mathcal{I}}(i) \frac{\mathsf{d}f_{i}(\xi_{s}^{*}, p)}{\mathsf{d}p(s')} \right) \right]}_{\text{inequality constr. } \mathcal{I} \end{split}$$

#### Gradient formula (dynamic)

Let

$$L_{\theta}(\xi, \lambda^{P}, \lambda^{\mathcal{E}}, \lambda^{\mathcal{I}}) = \underbrace{\sum_{s' \in \mathcal{S}} \xi(s') P_{\theta}(s'|s) V_{\theta}(s')}_{\text{equality constr. } \mathcal{E}} \underbrace{\sum_{s' \in \mathcal{S}} \xi(s') P_{\theta}(s'|s) - 1}_{\text{density constr. } \mathcal{I}}$$

For each  $s \in \mathcal{S}$ , we have saddle points  $(\xi_s^*, \lambda_s^{*,P}, \lambda_s^{*,\mathcal{E}}, \lambda_s^{*,\mathcal{I}})$  of  $L_{\theta}$ , and

$$\begin{split} \nabla_{\theta} V_{\theta}(s) &= \mathbb{E}^{\xi_{s}^{*}} \left[ \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \gamma^{t} \nabla_{\theta} \log(\pi_{\theta}(a_{t}|s_{t})) h_{\theta}(s_{t}, a_{t}) \, \middle| \, s_{0} = s \right] \\ h_{\theta}(s, a) &= C(s) + \sum_{s' \in \mathcal{S}} P(s'|s, a) \xi_{s}^{*}(s') \left[ \gamma V_{\theta}(s') - \lambda_{s}^{*,P} \right. \\ &\left. - \sum_{e \in \mathcal{E}} \left( \lambda_{s}^{*,\mathcal{E}}(e) \frac{\mathsf{d}g_{e}(\xi_{s}^{*}, p)}{\mathsf{d}p(s')} \right) - \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \left( \lambda_{s}^{*,\mathcal{I}}(i) \frac{\mathsf{d}f_{i}(\xi_{s}^{*}, p)}{\mathsf{d}p(s')} \right) \right]. \end{split}$$
equality constr.  $\mathcal{E}_{30}$ 
inequality constr.  $\mathcal{I}$