

# High-dimensional minimum variance portfolio estimation based on high frequency data

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# Background

## Estimation of MVP

We want to find out the estimation of high-dimensional MVP using high-frequency data, i.e., given  $p$  assets, we aim to find  $\omega$  such that

$$\arg \min_{\omega} \omega^T \Sigma \omega \quad \text{subject to} \quad \omega^T \mathbf{1} = 1 \quad (1)$$

where  $\omega = (\omega_1, \dots, \omega_p)^T$  represents the weights put on different assets. And the optimal solution is given by

$$\omega_{opt} = \frac{\Sigma^{-1} \mathbf{1}}{\mathbf{1}^T \Sigma^{-1} \mathbf{1}} \quad (2)$$

which also yields the minimum risk

$$R_{min} = \omega_{opt}^T \Sigma \omega_{opt} = \frac{1}{\mathbf{1}^T \Sigma^{-1} \mathbf{1}} \quad (3)$$

# Background

Since we do not have true covariance, we use the sample covariance instead. This leads to several issues.

- The actual risk of the "plug-in" portfolio (the portfolio that uses the sample covariance) can be devastatingly higher than the theoretical minimum risk.
- The perceived risk can be lower than the theoretical minimum risk.

To solve these problems, Fan et al (2012, [3]) add a gross-exposure constraint

$$\arg \min_w \mathbf{w}^\top \Sigma \mathbf{w} \quad \text{subject to} \quad \mathbf{w}^\top \mathbf{1} = 1 \text{ and } \|\mathbf{w}\|_1 \leq \lambda \quad (4)$$

where  $\|\mathbf{w}\|_1 = \sum_{i=1}^p |w_i|$  and  $\lambda$  is a chosen constant.

# Background

Since the difference between the risk of an estimated portfolio and the minimum risk going to zero **may not be sufficient to guarantee** optimality. (under rather general assumptions, the minimum risk  $R_{\min} = 1/\mathbf{1}^T \Sigma^{-1} \mathbf{1}$  may go to zero as the number of assets  $p \rightarrow \infty$ ).

Based on this consideration, we turn to find  $\hat{\mathbf{w}}$  which satisfies a stronger sense of consistency in that the ratio between the risk of the estimated portfolio and the minimum risk goes to 1, i.e.,

$$\frac{R(\hat{\mathbf{w}})}{R_{\min}} \xrightarrow{p} 1 \quad \text{as } p \rightarrow \infty$$

# Research Questions

- What is the estimator of minimum variance portfolio that can accommodate stochastic volatility and market microstructure noise?
- What is the estimator of the minimum risk?

# High-frequency Data Model

We assume that the latent  $p$ -dimensional log-price process  $(\mathbf{X}_t)$  follows a diffusion model:

$$d\mathbf{X}_t = \boldsymbol{\mu}_t dt + \boldsymbol{\Theta}_t d\mathbf{W}_t, \quad \text{for } t \geq 0 \quad (5)$$

where  $\boldsymbol{\mu}_t$  is the drift process,  $\boldsymbol{\Theta}_t$  is a  $p \times p$  matrix-valued process called co-volatility process, and  $\mathbf{W}_t$  is a  $p$ -dimensional Brownian motion.

Both  $\boldsymbol{\mu}_t$  and  $\boldsymbol{\Theta}_t$  are stochastic, càdlàg, and dependent on  $\mathbf{W}_t$ , all defined on a common filtered probability space  $(\Omega, \mathcal{F}, (\mathcal{F}_t)_{t \geq 0})$

# High-frequency Data Model

Let

$$\Sigma_t = \Theta_t \Theta_t^\top := (\sigma_t^{ij})$$

be the spot covariance matrix process. The *ex-post* integrated covariance (ICV) matrix over an interval, say  $[0, 1]$ , is

$$\Sigma_{\text{ICV}} = \Sigma_{\text{ICV},1} = (\sigma^{ij}) := \int_0^1 \Sigma_t dt$$

And in this slide, the inverse of  $\Sigma_{\text{ICV}}$  is denoted as  $\Omega_{\text{ICV}}$ , i.e.,  
 $\Omega_{\text{ICV}} := \Sigma_{\text{ICV}}^{-1}$



# High-frequency Data Model

$\Sigma_{ICV}$  is only measurable to  $\mathcal{F}_1$ , and so is  $R_{\min}$ . So it is impossible to construct a portfolio that is measurable to  $\mathcal{F}_0$  to achieve the minimum risk  $R_{\min}$

The **practical implementation of MVP** relies on making forecasts of  $\Sigma_{ICV}$  based on historical data.

The simplest approach is to assume  $\Sigma_{ICV, t} \approx \Sigma_{ICV, t+1}$ , where  $\Sigma_{ICV, t}$  stands for the ICV matrix in period  $[t-1, t]$ . (The volatility process is often found to be nearly unit root, in which case the one-step ahead prediction is approximately the current value)

If we can construct a portfolio  $w$  based on the observations during  $[t-1, t]$  that can approximately minimize the **ex-post** risk  $w^T \Sigma_{ICV, t} w$ , then if we hold the portfolio during the next period  $[t, t+1]$ , the actual risk is **still approximately minimized**.

# High-frequency Case with no Microstructure Noise

**Intuitive approach:** We use the constrained  $\ell_1$ - minimization for inverse matrix estimation (CLIME, Cai et al, [2])(under i.i.d. observation setting) to estimate the MVP. Denote the covariance matrix as  $\Sigma$ . Let  $\Omega := \Sigma^{-1}$  be the precision matrix. The CLIME estimator is defined as,

$$\hat{\Omega}_{\text{CLIME}} := \arg \min_{\Omega'} \|\Omega'\|_1 \text{ subject to } \|\hat{\Sigma}\Omega' - \mathbf{I}\|_{\infty} \leq \lambda \quad (6)$$

where  $\hat{\Sigma}$  is the sample covariance matrix. The  $\lambda$  is a tuning parameter and is usually chosen via cross-validation.

# CLIME Method

The CLIME method is designed for the following uniformity class of precision matrices. For any  $0 \leq q < 1$ ,  $s_0 = s_0(p) < \infty$  and  $M = M(p) < \infty$ , let

$$\mathcal{U}(q, s_0, M) = \{\Omega = (\Omega_{ij})_{p \times p} : \Omega \text{ positive definite},$$

$$\|\Omega\|_{L_1} \leq M, \max_{1 \leq i \leq p} \sum_{j=1}^p |\Omega_{ij}|^q \leq s_0\} \quad (7)$$

When the observations are i.i.d. sub-Gaussian and  $\Omega$  belongs to  $\mathcal{U}(q, s_0(p), M(p))$ , this method establishes consistency of  $\hat{\Omega}_{\text{CLIME}}$  when  $M^{2-2q} s_0 (\log p/n)^{(1-q)/2} \rightarrow 0$  holds.

However, in the high-frequency setting, the returns are not *i.i.d.*, so **the results above cannot apply.**

# Sparsity Assumption

The sparsity assumption  $\Omega = \Sigma^{-1} \in \mathcal{U}(q, s_0, M)$  (See Equation (7)) appears to be reasonable in financial applications. The following gives an example.

If the returns follow a conditional multivariate normal distribution matrix  $\Sigma$ , then the  $(i, j)$ -th element in  $\Omega$  being 0 is equivalent to that the returns of the  $i$ -th and  $j$ -th assets are conditionally independent given the other asset returns. And for stocks in different sectors, many pairs might be **conditionally independent or only weak dependent**.

# CLIME Method in the High-Frequency Setting

Our goal is to estimate  $\Omega_{ICV} := \Sigma_{ICV}^{-1}$ . And we use  $\hat{\Sigma}$  in Equation (6). When the true log-price are observed, one of the most commonly used estimators for  $\Sigma_{ICV}$  is the realized covariance matrix (RCV).

For each asset  $i$ , the observations at stage  $n$  are  $(x_{t_\ell^{i,n}}^i)$ , where  $0 = t_0^{i,n} < t_1^{i,n} < \dots < t_{N_i}^{i,n} = 1$  are the observation times. The  $n$  characterizes the observation frequency. As  $n \rightarrow \infty$ ,  $N_i \rightarrow \infty$ . The synchronous observation case corresponds to

$$t_\ell^{i,n} \equiv t_\ell^n \quad \text{for all } i = 1, \dots, p$$

which reduces to,

$$t_\ell^{i,n} = t_\ell^n = \ell/n, \ell = 0, 1, \dots, n \quad (8)$$

# MVP Estimator with no Microstructure Noise

The **resulting MVP estimator** is,

$$\hat{\mathbf{w}}_{\text{CLIME-SV}} = \frac{\hat{\mathbf{\Omega}}_{\text{CLIME-SV}} \mathbf{1}}{\mathbf{1}^\top \hat{\mathbf{\Omega}}_{\text{CLIME-SV}} \mathbf{1}} \quad (9)$$

which is associated with a risk of,

$$\begin{aligned} R_{\text{CLIME-SV}} &= \hat{\mathbf{w}}_{\text{CLIME-SV}}^\top \mathbf{\Sigma}_{\text{ICV}} \hat{\mathbf{w}}_{\text{CLIME-SV}} \\ &= \frac{\left( \hat{\mathbf{\Omega}}_{\text{CLIME-SV}} \mathbf{1} \right)^\top \mathbf{\Sigma}_{\text{ICV}} \left( \hat{\mathbf{\Omega}}_{\text{CLIME-SV}} \mathbf{1} \right)}{\left( \mathbf{1}^\top \hat{\mathbf{\Omega}}_{\text{CLIME-SV}} \mathbf{1} \right)^2} \end{aligned} \quad (10)$$

# Induction of MVP Estimator in Equation (9)

In the synchronous observation (Equation 8), let

$$\Delta \mathbf{X}_\ell := \mathbf{X}_{t_\ell^n} - \mathbf{X}_{t_{\ell-1}^n}$$

be the log-return vector over the time period  $[t_{\ell-1}^n, t_\ell^n]$ . Then, the RCV matrix is defined as,

$$\hat{\Sigma}_{\text{RCV}} = \sum_{\ell=1}^n \Delta \mathbf{X}_\ell (\Delta \mathbf{X}_\ell)^\top \quad (11)$$

We now can conduct the **constrained  $\ell_1$ -minimization for inverse matrix estimation with stochastic volatility** (CLIME-SV),  $\Omega_{\text{CLIME-SV}}$ ,

$$\hat{\Omega}_{\text{CLIME-SV}} := \arg \min_{\Omega'} \|\Omega'\|_1 \text{ subject to } \left\| \hat{\Sigma}_{\text{RCV}} \Omega' - \mathbf{I} \right\|_\infty \leq \lambda \quad (12)$$

# High-frequency Case with Microstructure Noise

However, in general, the observation prices are believed to be contaminated by microstructure noise. The true log-price  $(X_{t_\ell}^{i,n})$ , for each asset  $i$ , at stage  $n$  are

$$Y_{t_\ell}^{i,n} = X_{t_\ell}^{i,n} + \varepsilon_\ell^i \quad (13)$$

where the last term,  $\varepsilon_\ell^i$ 's represent microstructure noise.

In this case, if we simply plug  $(Y_{t_\ell}^{i,n})$  into the formula of RCV in Equation (11), the resulting estimator is not **consistent** even when the dimension  $p$  is fixed.



# Consistent Estimators in the Univariate Case

- Two-scales realized volatility (TSRV, Zhang et al. (2005))
- Multi-scale realized volatility (MSRV, Zhang (2006))
- Pre-averaging estimator (PAV, Jacod et al. (2009), Podolskij and Vetter (2009) and Jacod et al. (2019))
- Realized kernels (RK, Barndorff-Nielsen et al. (2008))
- Quasi-maximum likelihood estimator (QMLE, Xiu (2010))
- Estimated-price realized volatility (ERV, Li et al. (2016))
- Unified volatility estimator (UV, Li et al. (2018))

**Note:** These estimators are **not consistent** in the high-dimensional setting.

In this paper, we choose to work with **PAV**, with the equidistant time setting (8). **Asynchronicity** can be dealt with by using existing data synchronization techniques.

# Implementation of PAV Estimator

To implement PAV estimator, we fix a constant  $\theta > 0$  and let  $k_n = \lceil \theta n^{1/2} \rceil$  be the window length over which the averaging takes place. Define

$$\bar{\mathbf{Y}}_k^n = \frac{\sum_{i=k_n/2}^{k_n-1} \mathbf{Y}_{t_{k+i}} - \sum_{i=0}^{k_n/2-1} \mathbf{Y}_{t_{k+i}}}{k_n}$$

The PAV with weight function  $g(x) = x \wedge (1 - x)$  for  $x \in (0, 1)$  is defined as,

$$\hat{\Sigma}_{\text{PAV}} = \frac{12}{\theta \sqrt{n}} \sum_{k=0}^{n-k_n+1} \bar{\mathbf{Y}}_k^n \cdot (\bar{\mathbf{Y}}_k^n)^\top - \frac{6}{\theta^2 n} \text{diag} \left( \sum_{k=1}^n (\Delta Y_{t_k}^i)^2 \right)_{i=1, \dots, p} \quad (14)$$

We now define the **constrained  $\ell_1$ -minimization for inverse matrix estimation with stochastic volatility and microstructure noise**,  $\hat{\Omega}_{\text{CLIME-SVMN}}$ , as

$$\hat{\Omega}_{\text{CLIME-SVMN}} := \arg \min_{\Omega'} \|\Omega'\|_1 \text{ subject to } \left\| \hat{\Sigma}_{\text{PAV}} \Omega' - \mathbf{I} \right\|_\infty \leq \lambda \quad (15)$$

# Minimum Risk with CLIME Based Estimators with Sparsity Assumption

Recall Equation (3),  $R_{min} = \omega_{opt}^T \Sigma \omega_{opt} = \frac{1}{\mathbf{1}^T \Sigma^{-1} \mathbf{1}}$ . Our estimator under sparsity assumption with no microstructure noise is,

$$\hat{R}_{\text{CLIME-SV}} = \frac{1}{\mathbf{1}^T \hat{\Omega}_{\text{CLIME-SV}} \mathbf{1}} \quad (16)$$

where  $\hat{\Omega}_{\text{CLIME-SV}}$  is given in Equation (12). If there's microstructure noise, we have the corresponding minimum risk,

$$\hat{R}_{\text{CLIME-SVMN}} = \frac{1}{\mathbf{1}^T \hat{\Omega}_{\text{CLIME-SVMN}} \mathbf{1}} \quad (17)$$

where  $\hat{\Omega}_{\text{CLIME-SVMN}}$  is given in Equation (15)

# Without Sparsity Assumption: Low-Frequency i.i.d. Returns

This estimator is hence more suitable for the **low-frequency setting** and can be used to estimate the minimum risk over a long time period.

Suppose we observe  $n$  i.i.d. returns  $\mathbf{X}_1, \dots, \mathbf{X}_n$  (at low frequency). Let  $\mathbf{S}$  be the sample covariance matrix, and  $\mathbf{w}_p = \frac{\mathbf{S}^{-1}\mathbf{1}}{\mathbf{1}^T\mathbf{S}^{-1}\mathbf{1}}$  be the "plug-in" portfolio. The corresponding perceived risk is  $\hat{R}_p = \mathbf{w}_p^T \mathbf{S} \mathbf{w}_p$ .

We have the following results on the relationship between  $\hat{R}_p$  and the minimum risk  $R_{\min}$  based on which a **consistent estimator** of the minimum risk is constructed.

# Relationship between $\hat{R}_p$ and $R_{\min}$

Suppose that the returns  $\mathbf{X}_1, \dots, \mathbf{X}_n \sim \mathcal{N}(\boldsymbol{\mu}, \boldsymbol{\Sigma})$ . Suppose that both  $n$  and  $p \rightarrow \infty$ , in such a way that  $p_n := p/n \rightarrow \rho \in (0, 1)$ . Then

$$\left| \frac{\hat{R}_p}{R_{\min}} - (1 - \rho_n) \right| \xrightarrow{p} 0 \quad (18)$$

Therefore, if we define

$$\hat{R}_{\min} = \frac{1}{1 - \rho_n} \hat{R}_p \quad (19)$$

then, we have

$$\frac{\hat{R}_{\min}}{R_{\min}} \xrightarrow{p} 1 \quad (20)$$

and furthermore,

$$\sqrt{n-p} \left( \frac{\hat{R}_{\min}}{R_{\min}} - 1 \right) \Rightarrow \mathcal{N}(0, 2) \quad (21)$$

# Interpretation of above Relationship

Convergence (18) explains why the perceived risk is systematically lower than the minimum risk.

Convergence (21) shows the "blessing" of dimensionality: **the higher the dimension, the more accurate the estimation.**

In Basak et al (2009, [1]), it is shown that the risk of the "plug-in" portfolio is on average a higher-than-one multiple of the minimum risk. Since  $n$  and  $p \rightarrow \infty$  and  $p_n := p/n \rightarrow \rho \in (0, 1)$  their result can be strengthened to be that the risk of the "plug-in" portfolio is, with probability approaching one, a larger-than-one multiple of the minimum risk.

Using the results of Basak et al, we can show that,

$$\frac{R(w_p)}{R_{\min}} \xrightarrow{p} \frac{1}{1 - \rho} \quad (22)$$

where  $R(w_p) = w_p^T \Sigma w_p$  is the risk of the "plug-in" portfolio.

# High-Frequency Factor Structure

Let  $\mathbf{r}_k = (r_{k,1}, \dots, r_{k,p})^T, k = 1, \dots, n$  be asset returns, which can either be high-frequency or low-frequency returns. Assume  $\mathbf{r}_k$  admits a factor structure as follows,

$$\mathbf{r}_k = \alpha + \Gamma \mathbf{f}_k + \mathbf{z}_k \quad (23)$$

where  $\alpha$  is a  $p \times 1$  unknown vector,  $\Gamma$  is a  $p \times m$  unknown matrix,  $\mathbf{f}_k = (f_{k,1}, \dots, f_{k,m})^T$  are factor returns, and  $\mathbf{z}_k$  is  $p \times 1$  random vector with mean 0 and covariance matrix  $\Sigma_{k,0} = (\sigma_{ij}^{k,0})$

We assume that, for each  $k$ ,  $\mathbf{f}_k$ 's and  $\mathbf{z}_k$ 's are independent, and the pairs  $(\mathbf{r}_k, \mathbf{f}_k)$  are mutually independent. Let  $\Sigma_{\mathbf{r},k} = \text{Cov}(\mathbf{r}_k)$  and  $\Sigma_{\mathbf{f},k} = \text{Cov}(\mathbf{f}_k)$ , and let them be dependent on the time index  $k$ , **to accommodate the stochastic (co-)volatility**.

It's impossible to estimate individual  $\Sigma_{\mathbf{r},k}$  and  $\Sigma_{\mathbf{f},k}$ , but it's possible to estimate their means  $\Sigma_{\mathbf{r}} = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{k=1}^n \Sigma_{\mathbf{r},k}$ ,  $\Sigma_{\mathbf{f}} = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{k=1}^n \Sigma_{\mathbf{f},k}$ , and  $\Sigma_0 = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{k=1}^n \Sigma_{k,0}$ , and the corresponding  $\Omega_0 = \Sigma_0^{-1}$

# CLIME Method in Factor Structure

**Target:** Estimate the precision matrix  $\Omega_r := \Sigma_r^{-1}$

We define the **constrained  $\ell_1$ -minimization for inverse matrix estimation adjusted for factor** (CLIME-F),  $\hat{\Omega}_{\text{CLIME-F}}$ , as

$$\hat{\Omega}_{\text{CLIME-F}} = \hat{\Omega}_0 - \hat{\Omega}_0 \hat{\Gamma} \left( \mathbf{S}_f^{-1} + \hat{\Gamma}^\top \hat{\Omega}_0 \hat{\Gamma} \right)^{-1} \hat{\Gamma}^\top \hat{\Omega}_0 \quad (24)$$

where  $\mathbf{S}_f$  is the sample covariance of  $\mathbf{f}_k$ . And also, the **MVP estimator** is

$$\hat{\mathbf{w}}_{\text{CLIME-F}} = \frac{\hat{\Omega}_{\text{CLIME-F}} \mathbf{1}}{\mathbf{1}^\top \hat{\Omega}_{\text{CLIME-F}} \mathbf{1}} \quad (25)$$



# Induction of CLIME Method in Factor Structure

To estimate the model, we calculate the least square estimators of  $\alpha$  and  $\Gamma$ , denoted by  $\hat{\alpha}$  and  $\hat{\Gamma}$ . The residuals are  $e_k := r_k - \hat{\alpha} - \hat{\Gamma} f_k$ . Then we have the CLIME estimator of  $\Omega_0$ , denoted by  $\hat{\Omega}_0$  based on residuals.

$$\hat{\Omega}_0 := \arg \min_{\Omega'} \|\Omega'\|_1 \quad \text{subject to} \quad \|\mathbf{S}_e \Omega' - \mathbf{I}\|_\infty \leq \lambda \quad (26)$$

where  $\mathbf{S}_e$  is the sample covariance matrix of residuals. Note that,  $\Sigma_r = \Gamma \Sigma_f \Gamma^\top + \Sigma_0$ , we have,

$$\Omega_r = \left( \Gamma \Sigma_f \Gamma^\top + \Sigma_0 \right)^{-1} = \Omega_0 - \Omega_0 \Gamma \left( \Sigma_f^{-1} + \Gamma^\top \Omega_0 \Gamma \right)^{-1} \Gamma^\top \Omega_0 \quad (27)$$

Therefore, we can define the CLIME-F in (24)

# Conclusions

## Conclusions

- Propose estimators of the MVP in the high-dimensional setting based on high-frequency data.
- Propose consistent estimators of minimum risk with and without sparsity assumption

**Note:** For the details of simulation studies and empirical studies, please refer to Sections (4) and (5) in [High-dimensional minimum variance portfolio estimation based on high-frequency data](#).

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