

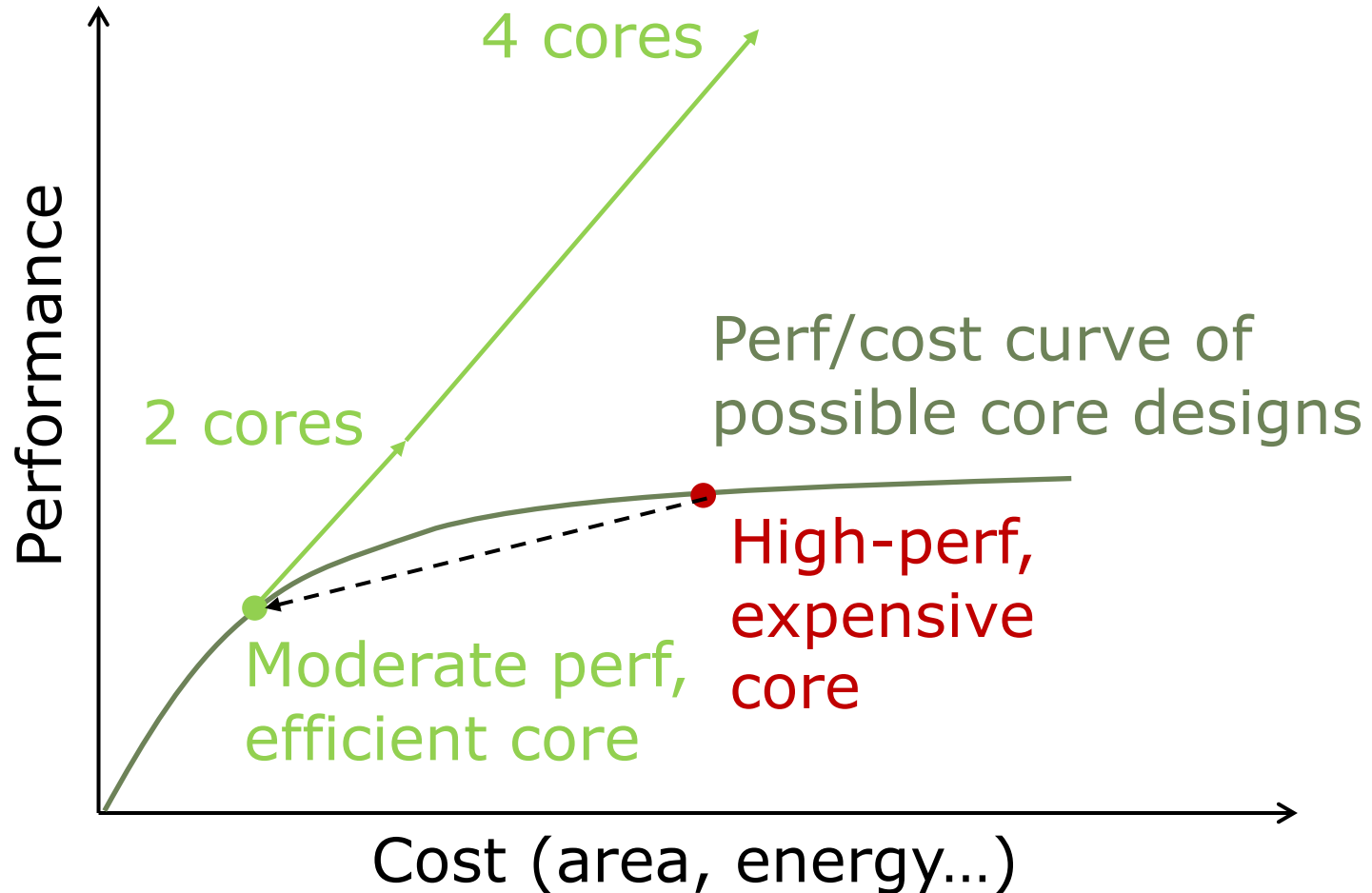
Transactional Memory

Daniel Sanchez

Computer Science & Artificial Intelligence Lab
M.I.T.

Based on slides from Christos Kozyrakis

Reminder: Why Multicore?



But Parallel Programming is HARD

- Divide algorithm into tasks
 - Map tasks to threads
 - Add synchronization (locks, barriers, ...) to avoid data races and ensure proper task ordering
-
- Pitfalls: scalability, locality, deadlock, livelock, fairness, races, composability, portability...

Example: Hash Table

- Sequential implementation:

```
V lookup(K key) {  
    int idx = hash(key);  
    for (;;) {  
        if (buckets[idx].empty)  
            return NOT_FOUND;  
        if (buckets[idx].key == key)  
            return buckets[idx].val;  
    }  
}
```

- Not thread-safe

- e.g., concurrent inserts and lookups cause races
- Need synchronization

Thread-Safe Hash Table with Coarse-Grain Locks

```
V lookup(K key) {  
    int idx = hash(key);  
    V result = NOT_FOUND;  
    lock(mutex);  
    for (;;) {  
        if (buckets[idx].empty) break;  
        if (buckets[idx].key == key) {  
            result = buckets[idx].val;  
            break;  
        }  
    }  
    unlock(mutex);  
    return result;  
}
```

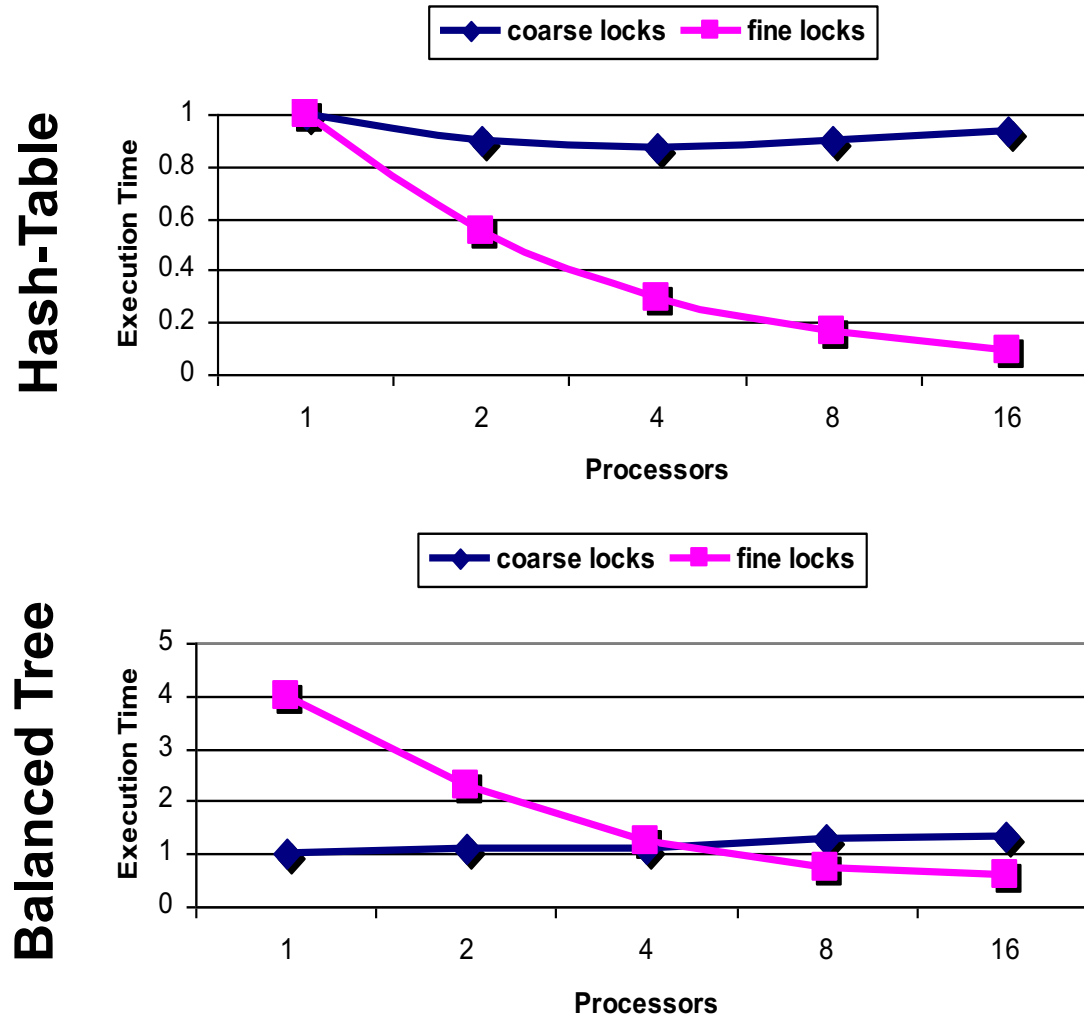
- Also add lock(mutex)/unlock(mutex) pairs to all other hash table methods (insert, remove, ...)
- *Problem?*

Thread-Safe Hash Table with Fine-Grain Locks

```
V lookup(K key) {  
    int idx = hash(key);  
    V result = NOT_FOUND;  
    for (;;) {  
        lock(buckets[idx].mutex);  
        if (buckets[idx].empty) {  
            unlock(buckets[idx].mutex);  
            break;  
        }  
        if (buckets[idx].key == key) {  
            result = buckets[idx].val;  
            unlock(buckets[idx].mutex);  
            break;  
        }  
        unlock(buckets[idx].mutex);  
    }  
    return result;  
}
```

- Per-bucket locks
- *Problems?*

Performance: Locks



Concurrency Control

- We need to implement concurrency control to avoid **races** on shared data!
- Options?
 - Stall
 - Mutual exclusion: Ensure at most one process in critical section; others wait
 - Speculate
 - Guess: No conflicts will occur during the critical section
 - Check: Detect whether conflicting data accesses occur
 - Recover: If conflict occurs, roll back; otherwise commit

Transactional Memory (TM)

- Memory transaction [Lomet'77, Knight'86, Herlihy & Moss'93]
 - An atomic & isolated sequence of memory accesses
 - Inspired by database transactions
- Atomicity (all or nothing)
 - At commit, all memory writes take effect at once
 - On abort, none of the writes appear to take effect
- Isolation
 - No other code can observe writes before commit
- Serializability
 - Transactions seem to commit in a single serial order
 - The exact order is not guaranteed

Programming with TM

```
void deposit(account, amount) {  
    lock(account.mutex);  
    int t = bank.get(account);  
    t = t + amount;  
    bank.put(account, t);  
    unlock(account.mutex);  
}
```



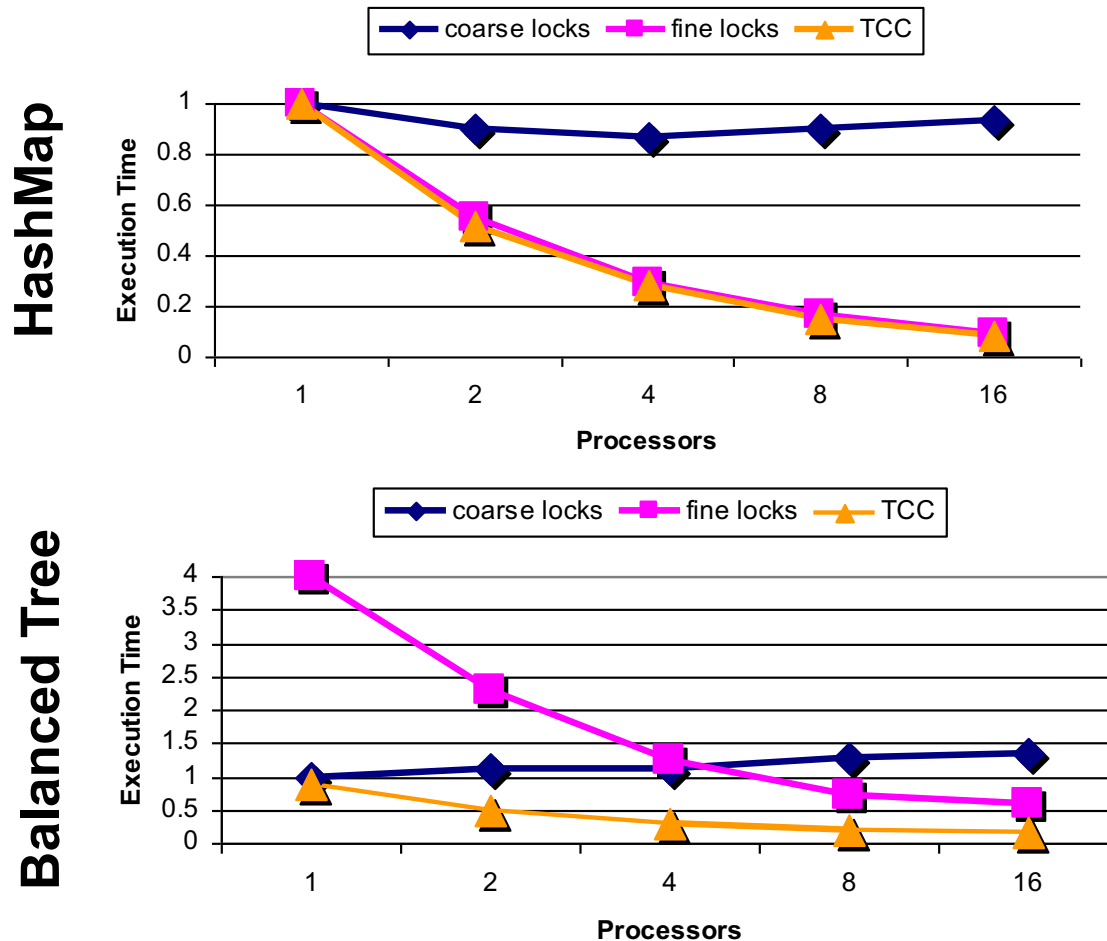
```
void deposit(account, amount) {  
    atomic {  
        int t = bank.get(account);  
        t = t + amount;  
        bank.put(account, t);  
    }  
}
```

- Declarative synchronization
 - Programmers says what but not how
 - No declaration or management of locks
- System implements synchronization
 - Typically through speculation
 - Performance hit only on conflicts (R-W or W-W)

Advantages of TM

- Easy-to-use synchronization
 - As easy to use as coarse-grain locks
 - Programmer declares, system implements
- High performance
 - Performs at least as well as fine-grain locks
 - Automatic read-read & fine-grain concurrency
 - No tradeoff between performance & correctness
- Composability
 - Safe & scalable composition of software modules (nested transactions)

Performance: Locks vs Transactions



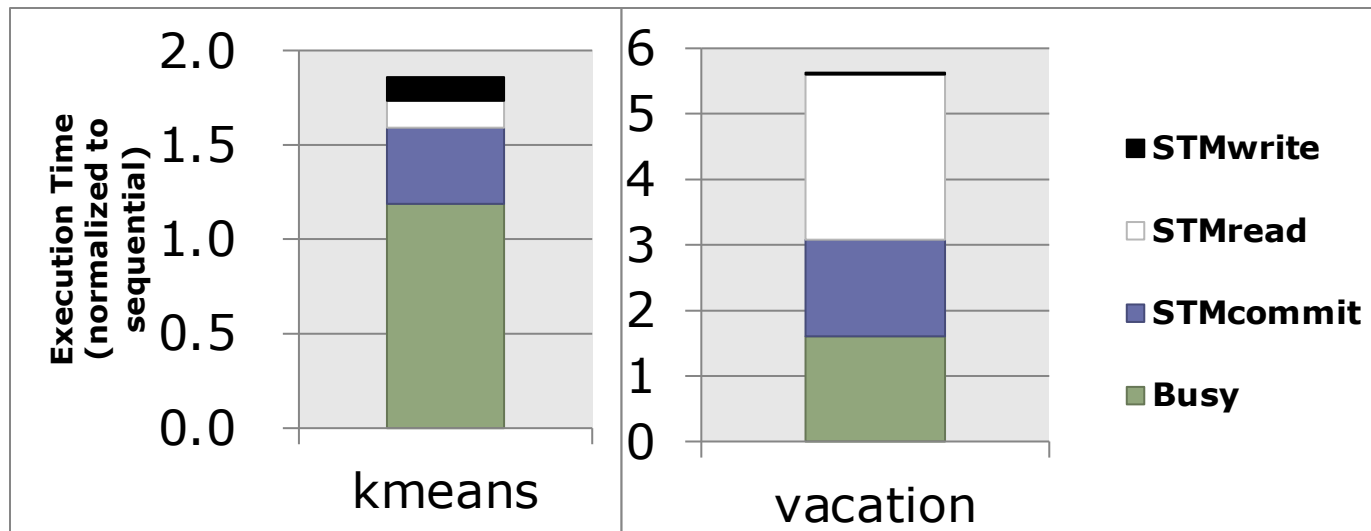
TCC: a HW-based TM system
[Hammond et al, ISCA'04]

TM Implementation Basics

- Use speculation to provide atomicity and isolation without sacrificing concurrency
- Basic implementation requirements
 - Data versioning
 - Conflict detection & resolution
- Implementation options
 - Hardware transactional memory (HTM)
 - Software transactional memory (STM)
 - Hybrid transactional memory
 - Hardware accelerated STMs and dual-mode systems

Motivation for Hardware TM

- Single-thread software TM performance:



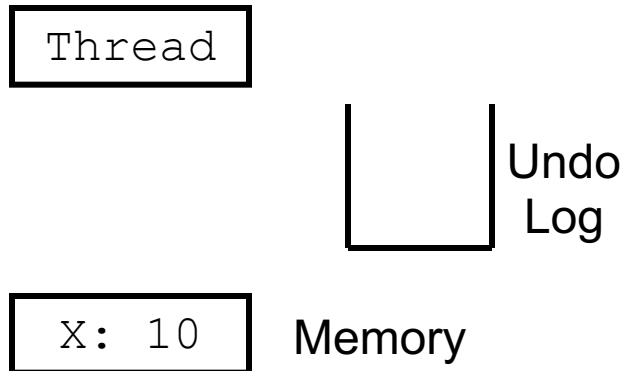
- Software TM suffers 2-8x slowdown over sequential
 - Short-term issue: demotivates parallel programming
 - Long-term issue: not energy-efficient
- Industry adopting Hardware TM: Intel (since Haswell), IBM (POWER8+, Blue Gene, zSeries), ARM (v9)

Data Management Policy

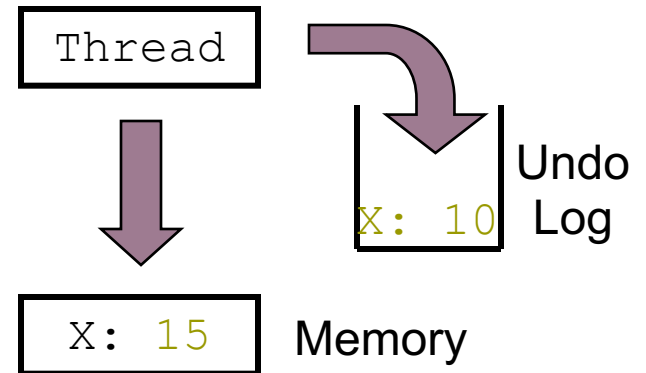
- Manage **uncommitted** (new) and **committed** (old) versions of data for concurrent transactions
1. Eager versioning (undo-log based)
 - Update memory location directly
 - Maintain undo info in a log
 - + Fast commits
 - Slow aborts
 2. Lazy versioning (write-buffer based)
 - Buffer data until commit in a write buffer
 - Update actual memory locations at commit
 - + Fast aborts
 - Slow commits

Eager Versioning Illustration

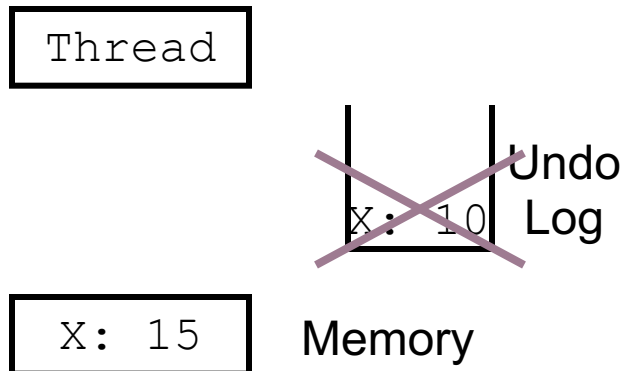
Begin Xaction



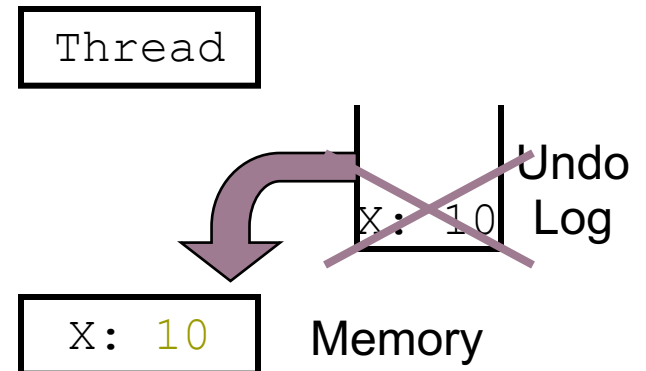
Write X ← 15



Commit Xaction

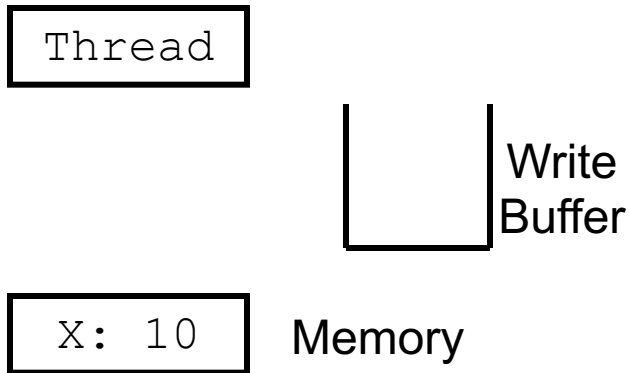


Abort Xaction

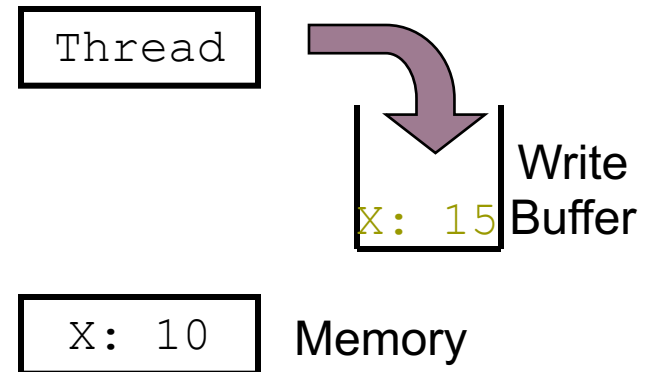


Lazy Versioning Illustration

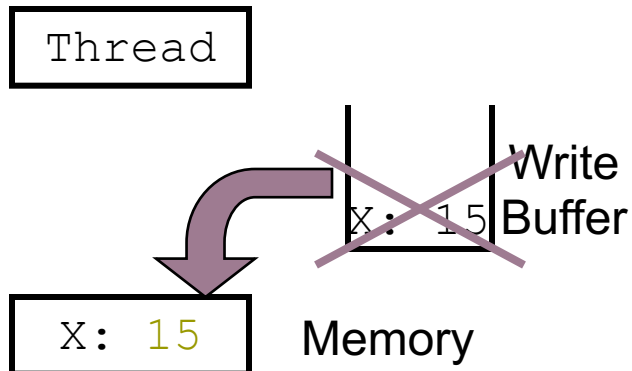
Begin Xaction



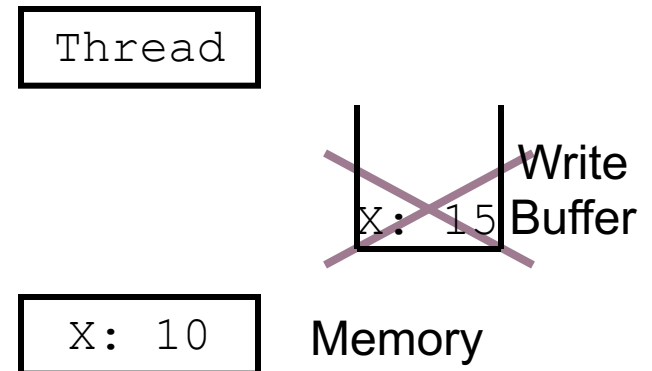
Write X ← 15



Commit Xaction



Abort Xaction



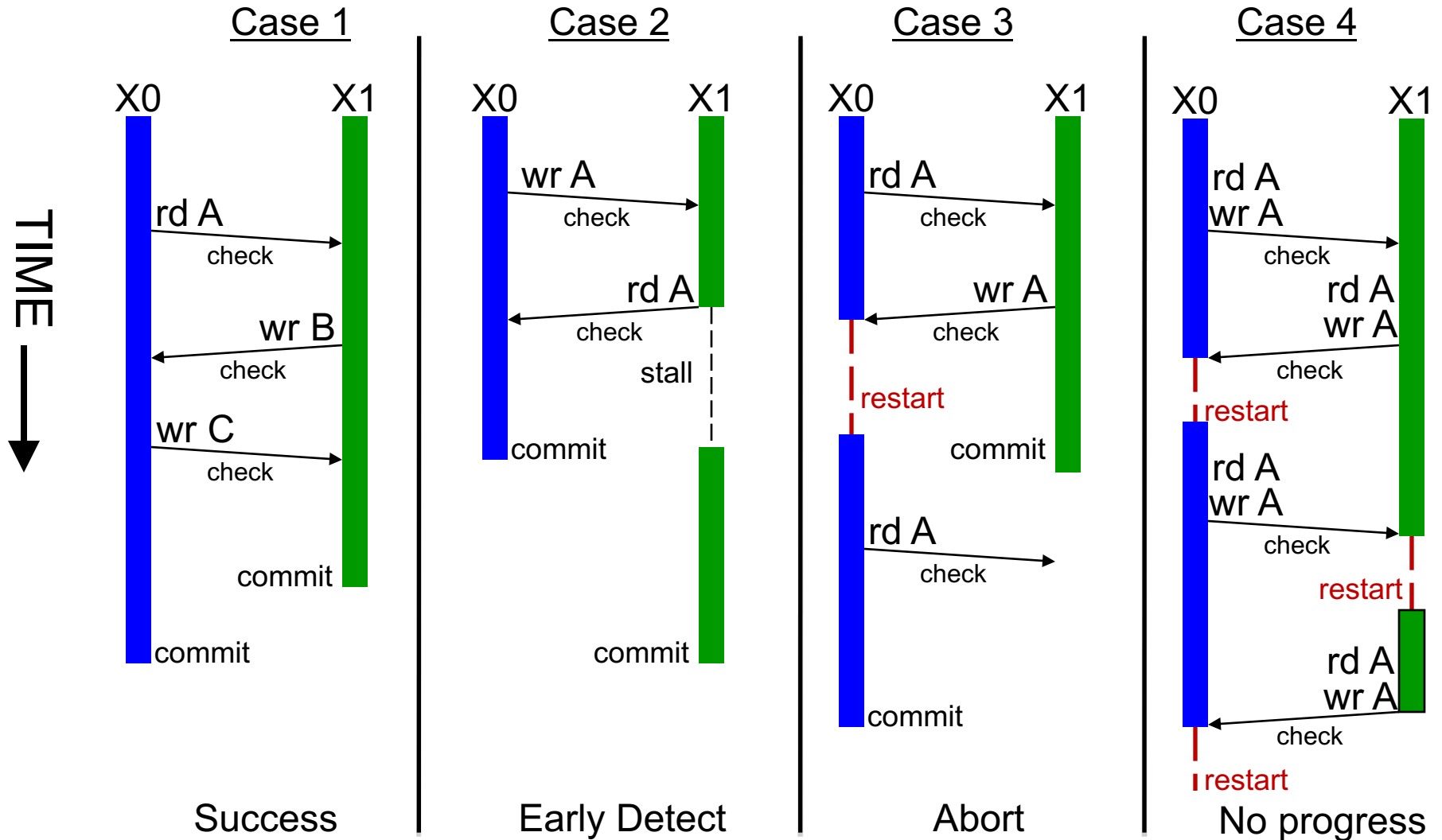
Conflict Detection

- Detect and handle conflicts between transaction
 - Read-Write and (often) Write-Write conflicts
 - Must track the transaction's read-set and write-set
 - Read-set: addresses read within the transaction
 - Write-set: addresses written within transaction

1. Pessimistic detection

- Check for conflicts during loads or stores
 - SW: SW barriers using locks and/or version numbers
 - HW: check through coherence actions
- Use contention manager to decide to stall or abort
 - Various priority policies to handle common case fast

Pessimistic Detection Illustration

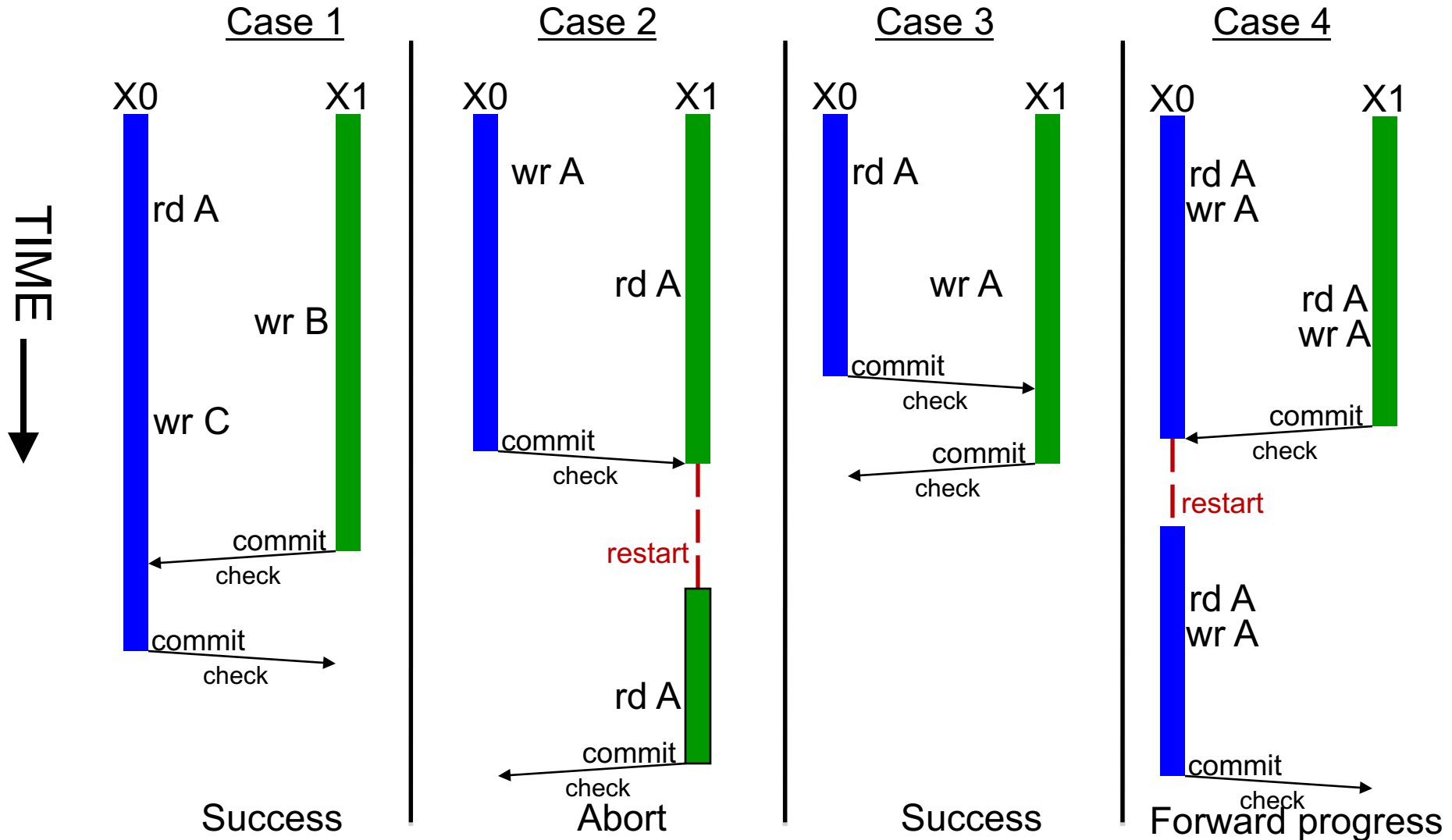


Conflict Detection (cont.)

2. Optimistic detection

- Detect conflicts when a transaction attempts to commit
 - SW: validate write/read-set using locks or version numbers
 - HW: validate write-set using coherence actions
 - Get exclusive access for cache lines in write-set
 - On a conflict, give priority to committing transaction
 - Other transactions may abort later on
 - On conflicts between committing transactions, use contention manager to decide priority
-
- Note: optimistic & pessimistic schemes together
 - Several STM systems are optimistic on reads, pessimistic on writes

Optimistic Detection Illustration



Conflict Detection Tradeoffs

1. Pessimistic conflict detection

- + Detect conflicts early
 - Undo less work, turn some aborts to stalls
- No forward progress guarantees, more aborts in some cases
 - Requires additional techniques to guarantee forward progress (e.g., backoff, prioritize older transactions)
- Locking issues (SW), fine-grain communication (HW)

2. Optimistic conflict detection

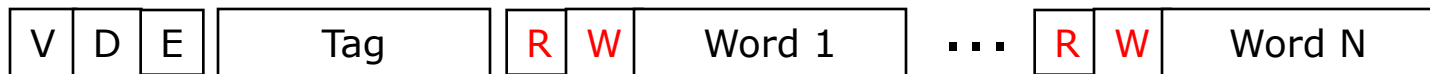
- + Forward progress guarantees
- + Potentially less conflicts, shorter locking (SW), bulk communication (HW)
- Detects conflicts late, still has fairness problems

HTM Implementation Overview

- Data versioning: Use caches
 - Cache the write-buffer or the undo-log
 - Cache metadata to track read-set and write-set
 - Can do with private, shared, and multi-level caches
- Conflict detection: Use the cache coherence protocol
 - Coherence lookups detect conflicts between transactions
 - Works with snooping & directory coherence
- Note: On aborts, must also restore register state → take register checkpoint
 - OOO cores support with minimal changes (recall rename table snapshots...)

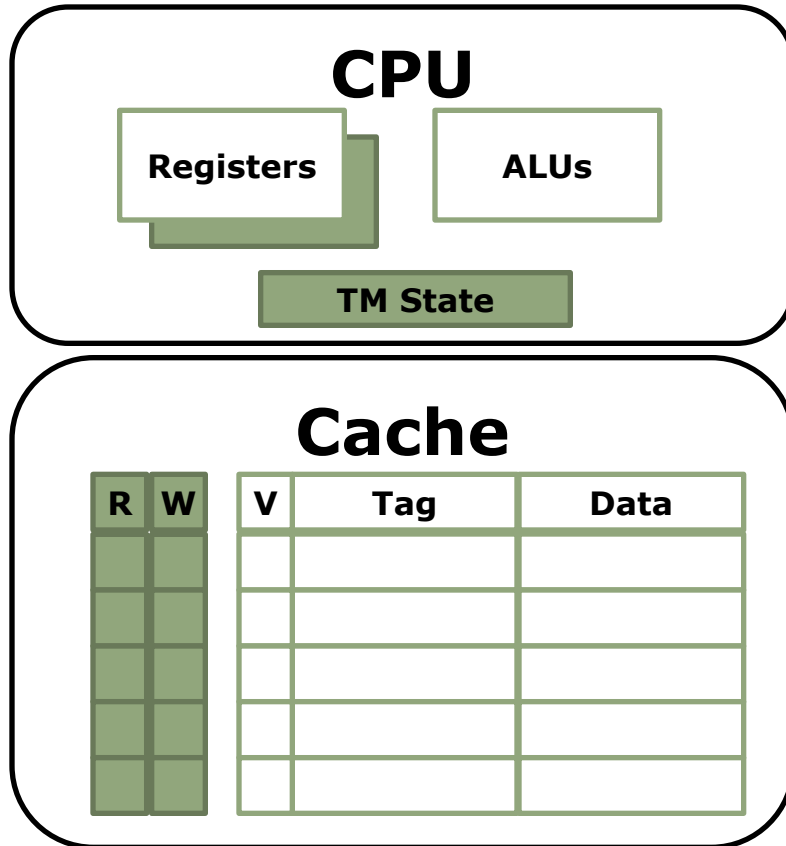
HTM Design

- Cache lines track read-set & write-set
 - R bit: indicates data read by transaction; set on load
 - W bit: indicates data written by transaction; set on store
 - R/W bits can be at word or cache-line granularity
 - R/W bits gang-cleared on transaction commit or abort



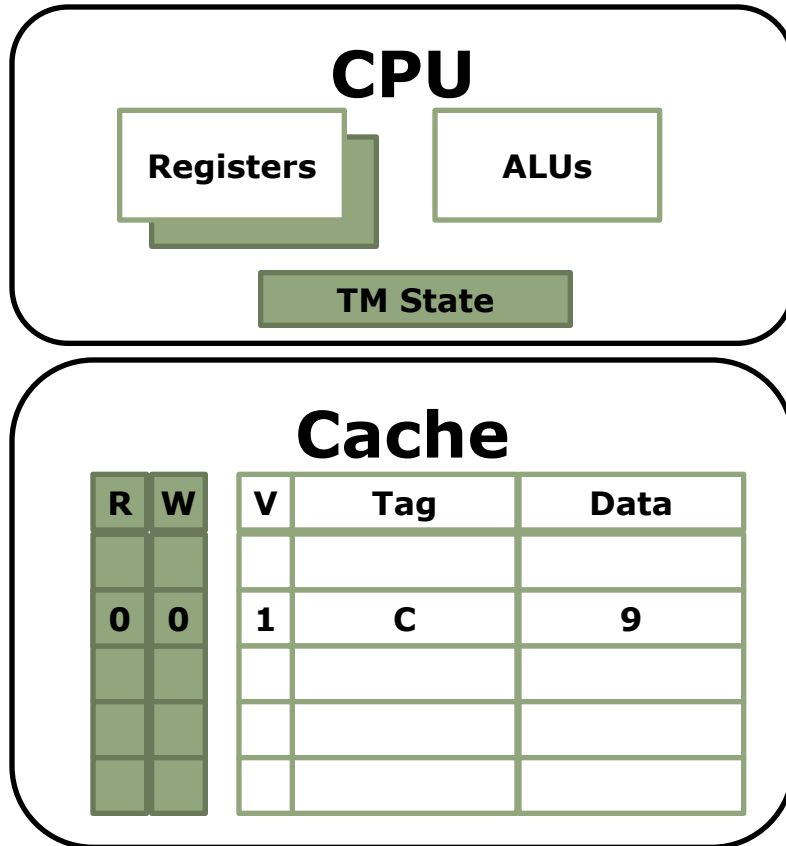
- Coherence requests check R/W bits to detect conflicts
 - Shared request to W-word is a read-write conflict
 - Exclusive request to R-word is a write-read conflict
 - Exclusive request to W-word is a write-write conflict

Example HTM: Lazy Optimistic



- CPU changes
 - Register checkpoint
 - TM state registers (status, pointers to handlers, ...)
- Cache changes
 - Per-line R/W bits
- Assume a bus-based system

HTM Transaction Execution



Xbegin 

Load A

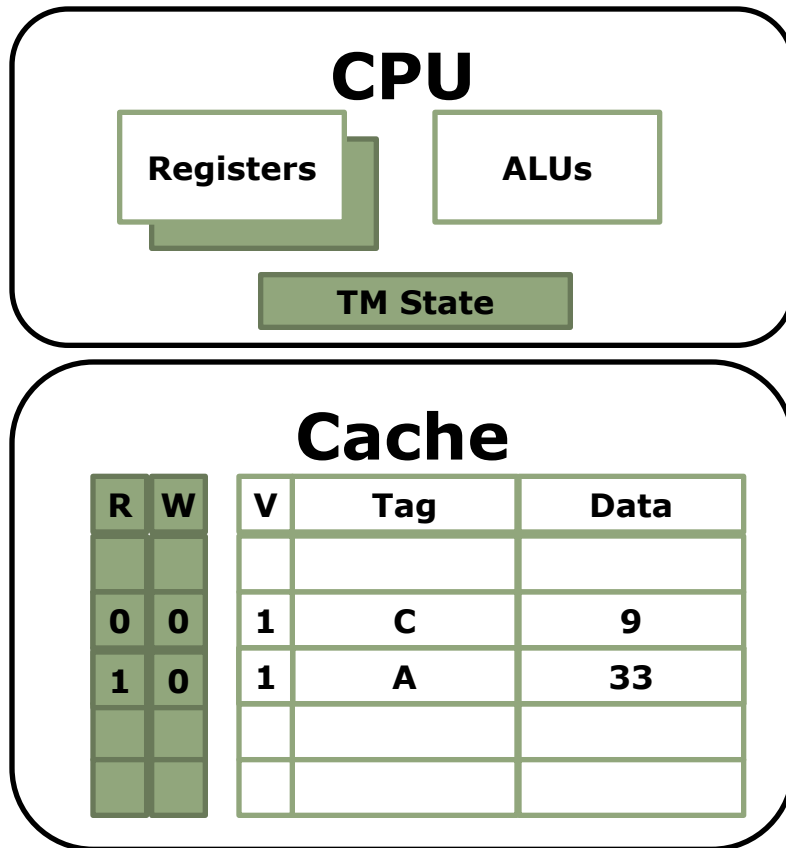
Store B \leftarrow 5

Load C

Xcommit

- Transaction begin
 - Initialize CPU & cache state
 - Take register checkpoint

HTM Transaction Execution



Xbegin

Load A \leftarrow

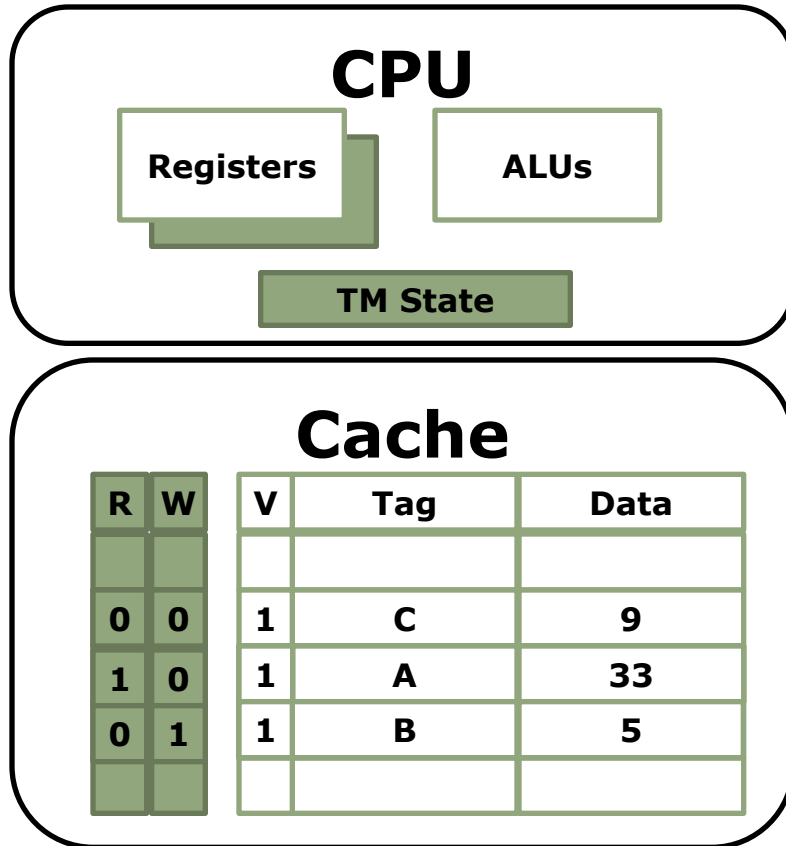
Store B \leftarrow 5

Load C

Xcommit

- Load operation
 - Serve cache miss if needed
 - Set line's R-bit

HTM Transaction Execution



Xbegin

Load A

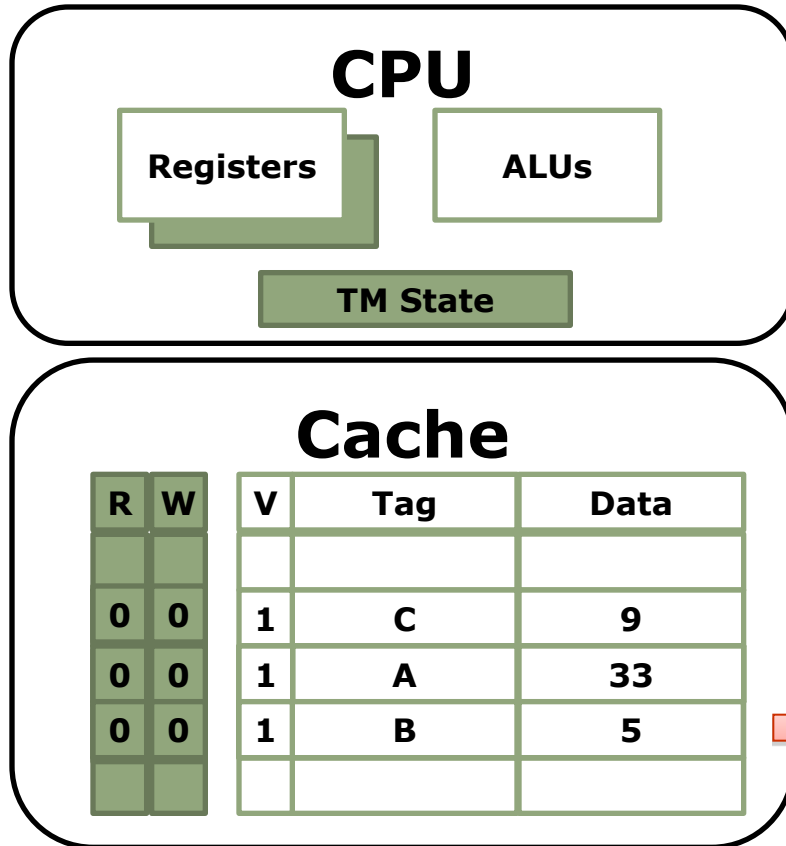
Store B \leftarrow 5 \leftarrow

Load C

Xcommit

- Store operation
 - Serve cache miss if needed (if other cores have line, get it shared anyway!)
 - Set line's W-bit

HTM Transaction Execution



Xbegin

Load A

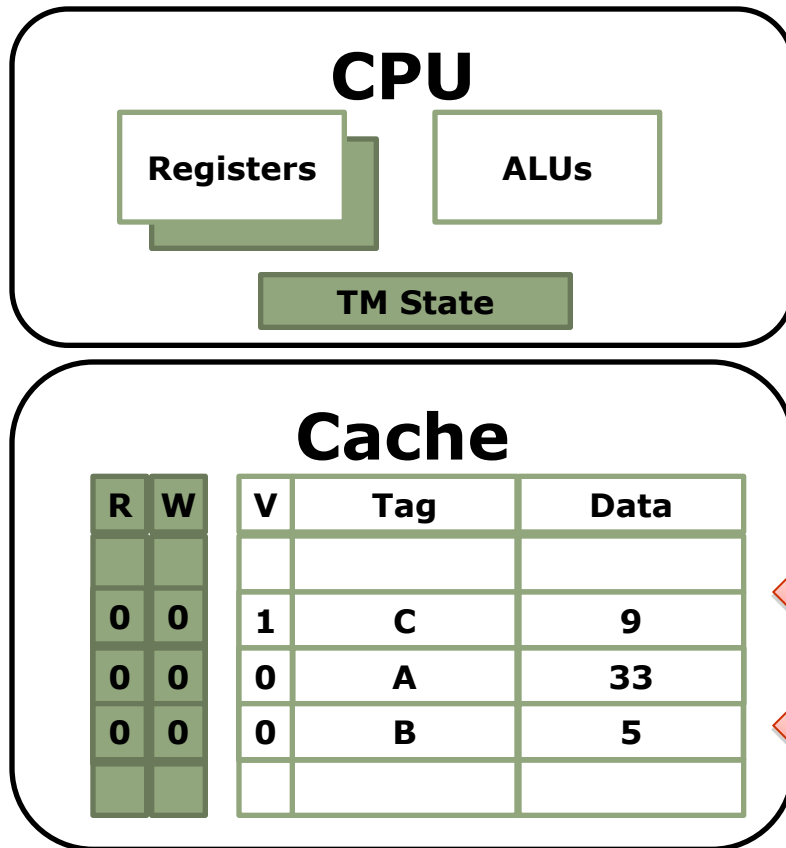
Store B \leftarrow 5

Load C

Xcommit \leftarrow

- Fast 2-phase commit:
 1. Validate: Request exclusive access to write-set lines (if needed)
 2. Commit: Gang-reset R&W bits, turns write-set data to valid (dirty) data

HTM Conflict Detection



Xbegin

Load A

Store B \leftarrow 5

Load C \leftarrow

Xcommit

upgradeX D ☒

upgradeX A ☐

- Fast conflict detection & abort:
 - Check: Lookup exclusive requests in the read-set and write-set
 - Abort: Invalidate write-set, gang-reset R and W bits, restore checkpoint

HTM Advantages

- Fast common-case behavior
 - Zero-overhead tracking of read-set & write-set
 - Zero-overhead versioning
 - Fast commits & aborts without data movement
 - Continuous validation of read-set
- Strong isolation
 - Conflicts detected on non-transactional loads/stores as well
- Simplifies multi-core coherence and consistency [Hammond'04, Ceze'07]
 - Recall: Sequential consistency hard to implement
 - How would you enforce SC using HTM?

HTM Challenges

- Performance pathologies: How to handle frequent contention?
 - Should HTM guarantee fairness/enforce priorities?
- Size limitations: What happens if read-set + write-set exceed size of cache?
- Virtualization, I/O, syscalls...
- Hybrid TMs may get the best of both worlds:
 - Handle common case in HW, but with no guarantees
 - Abort on cache overflow, interrupt, syscall instruction, ...
 - On abort, code can revert to software TM
 - Current approach in Intel's RTM...
 - ... but still unclear how to integrate HTM & STM well
- Currently, slow/limited adoption by programmers, who must still support non-HTM systems