

# Control theory and Reinforcement Learning - Lecture 1

**Carlos Esteve Yagüe**

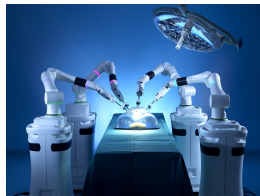
Universidad Autónoma de Madrid - Fundación Deusto

September 2020

We aim to act on a controlled environment in order to achieve a prescribed goal

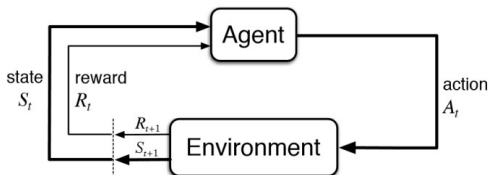


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**Definition:** Reinforcement Learning is the study of how to use past data to enhance the future manipulation of a dynamical system.

**Origins of RL:** Samuel, Klopff, Werbös, in the 1960's and 70's  
Barto, Sutton, Bertsekas from the 1990's-...  
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Drawing from Sutton and Barto, Reinforcement Learning: An Introduction, 1998.

Control Theory

Reinforcement Learning

Continuous or discrete setting

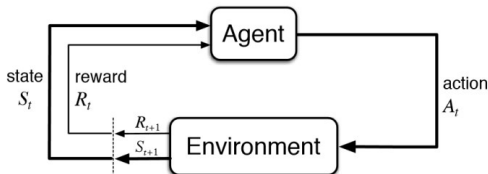
Discrete setting (Markov Decision Processes)

model  
+  
opt. criteria }  $\rightarrow$  action

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## Plan of the lecture:

- 1 General concepts and mathematical setting.
- 2 The value function and the Dynamic Programming Principle.
- 3 Value iteration method.
- 4 Linear Quadratic Regulator.

## Dynamical system (discrete time)

Let  $X \subset \mathbb{R}^d$ ,  $\mathcal{U} \subset \mathbb{R}^p$  and  $f : X \times \mathcal{U} \rightarrow X$

$$x_{t+1} = f(x_t, u_t)$$

- $x_0, x_1, x_2, \dots$  are the states of the system. We have  $x_t \in X$ , for  $t \geq 1$ .
- $u_0, u_1, u_2, \dots$  are the actions taken at each time (the policy). We have  $u_t \in \mathcal{U}_t \subset \mathcal{U}$ , for  $t \geq 1$ .

The next state depends on the current state and the action taken by the user (plus some random effects).

We define a **policy**  $\pi$  as a function which associates an action to any given history of the process

$$u_t = \pi_t(x_0, \dots, x_t, u_0, \dots, u_{t-1})$$

We will be interested on policies that only depend on the current state, i.e.

$$u_t = \pi(x_t)$$

## Stochastic dynamical system (discrete time)

Let  $X \subset \mathbb{R}^d$ ,  $\mathcal{U} \subset \mathbb{R}^p$  and  $f: X \times \mathcal{U} \times \mathcal{W} \rightarrow X$

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Let  $X$  and  $\mathcal{U}$  be finite sets:

$$x_{t+1} \sim p(\cdot | x_t, u_t)$$

where for all  $x, x' \in X$  and  $u' \in \mathcal{U}$ ,

$$p(x | x', u') := \Pr\{X_{t+1} = x | X_t = x', U_t = u'\}.$$

For each  $x', u' \in X \times \mathcal{U}$ , the function

$$\begin{aligned} p(\cdot | x', u') : X &\longrightarrow [0, 1] \\ x &\longmapsto \Pr\{X_{t+1} = x | X_t = x', U_t = u'\} \end{aligned}$$

defines a probability distribution over the finite set  $X$  that determines the dynamics of the MDP.

The probability of the next state is a function of the current state and the action.

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## The time-horizon

- $T \in (0, \infty)$  is given (finite horizon), possibly with a terminal cost  $g(x(T))$ .
- $T$  is a random stopping time, probably depending on  $x_t$ .
- $T$  is infinite with  $\gamma < 1$  (discounted cost).
- $T$  is infinite with  $\gamma \rightarrow 1^-$  (average cost).

$$\underset{\pi(\cdot)}{\text{minimize}} \mathbb{E}_w \left[ \sum_{t=0}^{T-1} C(x_t, u_t) + C_f(x_T) \right]$$

$$\text{s.t. } x_{t+1} = f(x_t, u_t, w_t)$$

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*(sometimes we can consider  $\gamma = 1$ )*

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## The value function

$$V^*(x, T) := \min_{\pi(\cdot)} \mathbb{E}_w \left[ \sum_{t=0}^{T-1} C(x_t, u_t) + C_f(x_T) \right], \quad V^*(x) := \min_{\pi(\cdot)} \mathbb{E}_w \left[ \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \gamma^t C(x_t, u_t) \right].$$

Bellman's Dynamic Programming (Bellman equation)

$$V^*(x, T) = \min_{u \in \mathcal{U}} \mathbb{E}_{w_0} \left\{ C(x, u) + V^*(f(x, u, w_0), T-1) \right\}$$

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Why is it good to have the value function?

Optimal feedback policy:

$$\pi_t(\tau_t) = \operatorname{argmin}_{u \in \mathcal{U}} \mathbb{E}_{w_0} \left\{ C(x_t, u) + \gamma V^*(f(x_t, u, w_0), T-t) \right\}$$

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Recursive formula for the value function:

$$V^*(x, 0) = C_f(x),$$

and for all  $0 \leq t \leq T-1$

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## Example in a finite setting (MDP)

Set of states:  $\mathcal{S} = \{1, 2, 3, 4\}$

Set of possible actions:  $\mathcal{U} = \{0, 1, -1\}$

Dynamics:  $x_{t+1} = x_t + u_t$

Running and terminal cost:

$$C(u) := \begin{cases} 2 & u = -1 \\ 0 & u = 0 \\ 1 & u = 1 \end{cases}$$

$$C_f(x) := \begin{cases} 0 & x = 1 \\ 10 & x = 2 \\ 0 & x = 3 \\ -10 & x = 4 \end{cases}$$

0

10

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-10

$C_f(\cdot) = V(\cdot, 0)$

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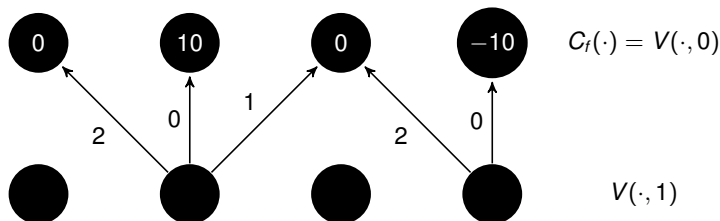
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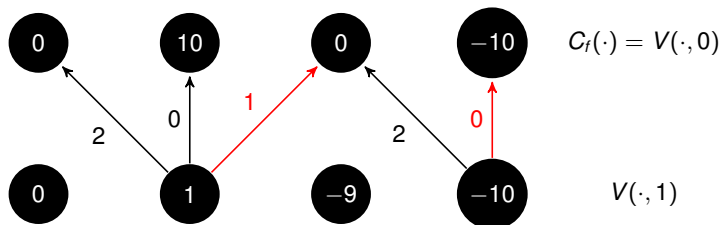
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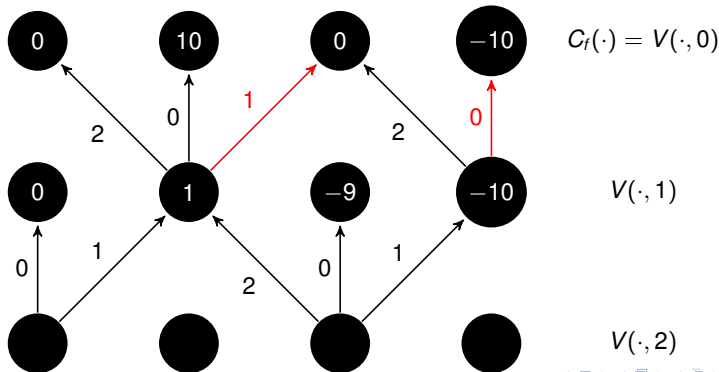
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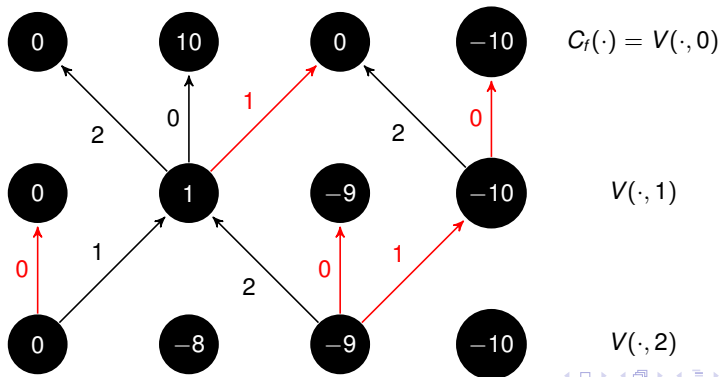
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$$C(u) := \begin{cases} 2 & u = -1 \\ 0 & u = 0 \\ 1 & u = 1 \end{cases}$$

$$C_f(x) := \begin{cases} 0 & x = 1 \\ 10 & x = 2 \\ 0 & x = 3 \\ -10 & x = 4 \end{cases}$$



## Example in a finite setting (MDP)

Set of states:  $\mathcal{S} = \{1, 2, 3, 4\}$

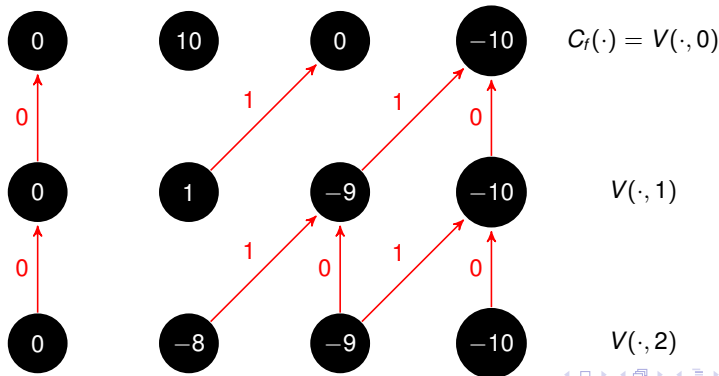
Set of possible actions:  $\mathcal{U} = \{0, 1, -1\}$

Dynamics:  $x_{t+1} = x_t + u_t$

Running and terminal cost:

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Let us consider the infinite-horizon problem with discounted factor  $\gamma \in (0, 1)$ . Let  $X$  and  $\mathcal{U}$  be the state space and the control space respectively (they can be continuous or discrete).

We recall the definition of the value function

$$V^*(x) := \min_{\pi(\cdot)} \left[ \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \gamma^t C(x_t, u_t) \right]$$

We look for a solution  $V(\cdot)$  of the Bellman equation

$$V(x) = \min_{u \in \mathcal{U}} \{C(x, u) + \gamma V(f(x, u))\}$$

## Definition

We define the **Bellman operator**  $\mathcal{T} : L^\infty(X) \rightarrow L^\infty(X)$  as

$$\mathcal{T}V(x) := \min_{u \in \mathcal{U}} \{C(x, u) + \gamma V(f(x, u))\}, \quad \text{for all } x \in X.$$

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Let  $V, W : X \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$  be two function in  $L^\infty(X)$ .

$$\begin{aligned}\mathcal{T}V(x) - \mathcal{T}W(x) &= \min_{u \in \mathcal{U}} \{C(x, u) + \gamma V(f(x, u))\} - \min_{w \in \mathcal{U}} \{C(x, w) + \gamma W(f(x, w))\} \\ &\leq C(x, w^*) + \gamma V(f(x, w^*)) - C(x, w^*) + \gamma W(f(x, w^*)) \\ &= \gamma \max_{x \in X} \{V(x) - W(x)\} \\ &\leq \gamma \|V(\cdot) - W(\cdot)\|_\infty.\end{aligned}$$

Interchanging the roles of  $V$  and  $W$  we obtain that  $\mathcal{T}$  satisfies the contraction property

$$\|\mathcal{T}V(\cdot) - \mathcal{T}W(\cdot)\|_\infty \leq \gamma \|V(\cdot) - W(\cdot)\|_\infty,$$

where  $\gamma \in (0, 1)$  is the discount factor.

As a consequence of Banach's fix-point Theorem we have

$$V_k(\cdot) := \mathcal{T} \circ \underbrace{\dots}_{k \text{ times}} \circ \mathcal{T}V(\cdot) \longrightarrow V^*(\cdot), \quad \text{as } k \rightarrow \infty \text{ in } L^\infty(X),$$

where  $V^*$  is **the unique** fix point of the Bellman operator, i.e.

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## Value iteration to approximate $V^*$

We initialize  $V_0(x)$  arbitrarily (for instance  $V_0(x) \equiv 0$ ).

For each  $x$ , we update the value function as follows:

$$V_{k+1}(x) = \min_{u \in \mathcal{U}} \{C(x, u) + \gamma V_k(f(x, u))\}.$$

- The discount factor ensures the convergence of the method with rate  $\gamma^k$ .
- **Remark:**

$$V_k(x) = \min_{u_1 \dots u_k} \left\{ \sum_{t=0}^{k-1} \gamma^t C(x_t, u_t) + \gamma^k V_0(x_k) \right\}.$$

The function  $V_k$  is the value function of a finite-horizon problem with terminal cost  $\gamma^k V_0(x)$ .

- **Question:** Can we consider the non-discounted infinite-horizon problem? Under which conditions?

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## Example in finite setting

Set of states:  $X = \{1, 2, 3, 4\}^2$

Set of possible action:  $\mathcal{U} = \{(0, 0), \pm(1, 0), \pm(0, 1)\}$

Running cost:  $C(x, u) = c(x) + |u|$ , where  $c(x)$  is defined by the following table:

1.0	1.0	0	0
1.0	1.0	0	0
0	0	3.0	3.0
0	0	3.0	-5.0

Discount factor:  $\gamma = 0.9$ .

### Value iteration

We initialize the value function  $V_0(x) \equiv 0$ , and then iterate using the Bellman operator.

0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0

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1.9	1.9	0	0
1.9	1.9	0	0
0	0	4.0	-0.5
0	0	-0.5	-9.5

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### Value iteration

We initialize the value function  $V_0(x) \equiv 0$ , and then iterate using the Bellman operator.

2.7	2.0	0	0
2.0	2.0	0	0
0	0	3.5	-4.5
0	0	-4.5	-14.0

## Example in finite setting

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1.0	1.0	0	0
0	0	3.0	3.0
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We initialize the value function  $V_0(x) \equiv 0$ , and then iterate using the Bellman operator.

3.4	2.0	0	0
2.0	2.0	0	-3.1
0	0	-0.095	-8.2
0	-3.1	-8.2	-17.0

## Example in finite setting

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1.0	1.0	0	0
1.0	1.0	0	0
0	0	3.0	3.0
0	0	3.0	-5.0

Discount factor:  $\gamma = 0.9$ .

### Value iteration

We initialize the value function  $V_0(x) \equiv 0$ , and then iterate using the Bellman operator.

3.8	2.0	0	-1.8
2.0	2.0	-1.8	-6.4
0	-1.8	-3.4	-11.0
-1.8	-6.4	-11.0	-20.0

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1.0	1.0	0	0
1.0	1.0	0	0
0	0	3.0	3.0
0	0	3.0	-5.0

Discount factor:  $\gamma = 0.9$ .

### Value iteration

We initialize the value function  $V_0(x) \equiv 0$ , and then iterate using the Bellman operator.

3.8	2.0	-0.61	-4.7
2.0	0.39	-4.7	-9.3
-0.61	-4.7	-6.3	-14.0
-4.7	-9.3	-14.0	-23.0

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1.0	1.0	0	0
0	0	3.0	3.0
0	0	3.0	-5.0

Discount factor:  $\gamma = 0.9$ .

### Value iteration

We initialize the value function  $V_0(x) \equiv 0$ , and then iterate using the Bellman operator.

3.8	1.5	-3.3	-7.4
1.5	-2.3	-7.4	-12.0
-3.3	-7.4	-9.0	-17.0
-7.4	-12.0	-17.0	-26.0

## Example in finite setting

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1.0	1.0	0	0
1.0	1.0	0	0
0	0	3.0	3.0
0	0	3.0	-5.0

Discount factor:  $\gamma = 0.9$ .

### Value iteration

We initialize the value function  $V_0(x) \equiv 0$ , and then iterate using the Bellman operator.

3.3	-0.94	-5.7	-9.8
-0.94	-4.7	-9.8	-14.0
-5.7	-9.8	-11.0	-19.0
-9.8	-14.0	-19.0	-28.0

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1.0	1.0	0	0
1.0	1.0	0	0
0	0	3.0	3.0
0	0	3.0	-5.0

Discount factor:  $\gamma = 0.9$ .

### Value iteration

We initialize the value function  $V_0(x) \equiv 0$ , and then iterate using the Bellman operator.

1.2	-3.1	-7.8	-12.0
-3.1	-6.8	-12.0	-17.0
-7.8	-12.0	-14.0	-22.0
-12.0	-17.0	-22.0	-31.0

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Set of states:  $X = \{1, 2, 3, 4\}^2$

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1.0	1.0	0	0
1.0	1.0	0	0
0	0	3.0	3.0
0	0	3.0	-5.0

Discount factor:  $\gamma = 0.9$ .

### Value iteration

We initialize the value function  $V_0(x) \equiv 0$ , and then iterate using the Bellman operator.

-0.78	-5.0	-9.7	-14.0
-5.0	-8.7	-14.0	-18.0
-9.7	-14.0	-15.0	-24.0
-14.0	-18.0	-24.0	-33.0

## Example in finite setting

Set of states:  $X = \{1, 2, 3, 4\}^2$

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1.0	1.0	0	0
1.0	1.0	0	0
0	0	3.0	3.0
0	0	3.0	-5.0

Discount factor:  $\gamma = 0.9$ .

### Value iteration

We initialize the value function  $V_0(x) \equiv 0$ , and then iterate using the Bellman operator.

-2.5	-6.8	-11.0	-16.0
-6.8	-10.0	-16.0	-20.0
-11.0	-16.0	-17.0	-25.0
-16.0	-20.0	-25.0	-34.0

## Example in finite setting

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1.0	1.0	0	0
1.0	1.0	0	0
0	0	3.0	3.0
0	0	3.0	-5.0

Discount factor:  $\gamma = 0.9$ .

### Value iteration

We initialize the value function  $V_0(x) \equiv 0$ , and then iterate using the Bellman operator.

-4.1	-8.3	-13.0	-17.0
-8.3	-12.0	-17.0	-22.0
-13.0	-17.0	-19.0	-27.0
-17.0	-22.0	-27.0	-36.0

## Example in finite setting

Set of states:  $X = \{1, 2, 3, 4\}^2$

Set of possible action:  $\mathcal{U} = \{(0, 0), \pm(1, 0), \pm(0, 1)\}$

Running cost:  $C(x, u) = c(x) + |u|$ , where  $c(x)$  is defined by the following table:

1.0	1.0	0	0
1.0	1.0	0	0
0	0	3.0	3.0
0	0	3.0	-5.0

Discount factor:  $\gamma = 0.9$ .

### Value iteration

We initialize the value function  $V_0(x) \equiv 0$ , and then iterate using the Bellman operator.

-5.5	-9.8	-14.0	-19.0
-9.8	-13.0	-19.0	-23.0
-14.0	-19.0	-20.0	-28.0
-19.0	-23.0	-28.0	-37.0

## Example in finite setting

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1.0	1.0	0	0
1.0	1.0	0	0
0	0	3.0	3.0
0	0	3.0	-5.0

Discount factor:  $\gamma = 0.9$ .

### Value iteration

We initialize the value function  $V_0(x) \equiv 0$ , and then iterate using the Bellman operator.

-6.8	-11.0	-16.0	-20.0
-11.0	-15.0	-20.0	-24.0
-16.0	-20.0	-21.0	-30.0
-20.0	-24.0	-30.0	-39.0

## Example in finite setting

Set of states:  $X = \{1, 2, 3, 4\}^2$

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1.0	1.0	0	0
1.0	1.0	0	0
0	0	3.0	3.0
0	0	3.0	-5.0

Discount factor:  $\gamma = 0.9$ .

### Value iteration

We initialize the value function  $V_0(x) \equiv 0$ , and then iterate using the Bellman operator.

-7.9	-12.0	-17.0	-21.0
-12.0	-16.0	-21.0	-26.0
-17.0	-21.0	-23.0	-31.0
-21.0	-26.0	-31.0	-40.0

## Example in finite setting

Set of states:  $X = \{1, 2, 3, 4\}^2$

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1.0	1.0	0	0
1.0	1.0	0	0
0	0	3.0	3.0
0	0	3.0	-5.0

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### Value iteration

We initialize the value function  $V_0(x) \equiv 0$ , and then iterate using the Bellman operator.

-8.9	-13.0	-18.0	-22.0
-13.0	-17.0	-22.0	-27.0
-18.0	-22.0	-24.0	-32.0
-22.0	-27.0	-32.0	-41.0

## Example in finite setting

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1.0	1.0	0	0
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Discount factor:  $\gamma = 0.9$ .

### Value iteration

We initialize the value function  $V_0(x) \equiv 0$ , and then iterate using the Bellman operator.

-9.9	-14.0	-19.0	-23.0
-14.0	-18.0	-23.0	-28.0
-19.0	-23.0	-25.0	-33.0
-23.0	-28.0	-33.0	-42.0

This is the approximation of the value function with a tolerance error of 1.

## Example in finite setting

Set of states:  $\mathcal{S} = \{1, 2, 3, 4\}^2$

Set of possible action:  $\mathcal{U} = \{(0, 0), \pm(1, 0), \pm(0, 1)\}$

Running cost:  $C(x, u) = c(x) + |u|$ , where  $c(x)$  is defined by the following table:

1.0	1.0	0	0
1.0	1.0	0	0
0	0	3.0	3.0
0	0	3.0	-5.0

Discount factor:  $\gamma = 0.5$ .

### Value iteration

We initialize the value function  $V_0(x) \equiv 0$ , and then iterate using the Bellman operator.

0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0
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0	0	0	0

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1.6	1.6	0	0
1.6	1.6	0	0
0	0	4.0	1.0
0	0	1.0	-8.0

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We initialize the value function  $V_0(x) \equiv 0$ , and then iterate using the Bellman operator.

1.96	1.96	0	0
1.96	1.96	0	0
0	0	4.0	-0.8
0	0	-0.8	-9.8

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0	0	3.0	3.0
0	0	3.0	-5.0

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### Value iteration

We initialize the value function  $V_0(x) \equiv 0$ , and then iterate using the Bellman operator.

2.18	2.0	0	0
2.0	2.0	0	0
0	0	3.52	-1.88
0	0	-1.88	-10.9

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### Value iteration

We initialize the value function  $V_0(x) \equiv 0$ , and then iterate using the Bellman operator.

2.31	2.0	0	0
2.0	2.0	0	-0.128
0	0	2.87	-2.53
0	-0.128	-2.53	-11.5

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0	0	3.0	3.0
0	0	3.0	-5.0

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We initialize the value function  $V_0(x) \equiv 0$ , and then iterate using the Bellman operator.

2.38	2.0	0	0
2.0	2.0	0	-0.517
0	0	2.48	-2.92
0	-0.517	-2.92	-11.9

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0	0	3.0	-5.0

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We initialize the value function  $V_0(x) \equiv 0$ , and then iterate using the Bellman operator.

2.43	2.0	0	0
2.0	2.0	0	-0.75
0	0	2.25	-3.15
0	-0.75	-3.15	-12.2

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We initialize the value function  $V_0(x) \equiv 0$ , and then iterate using the Bellman operator.

2.46	2.0	0	0
2.0	2.0	0	-0.89
0	0	2.11	-3.29
0	-0.89	-3.29	-12.3

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2.47	2.0	0	0
2.0	2.0	0	-0.974
0	0	2.03	-3.37
0	-0.974	-3.37	-12.4

This is the approximation of the value function with a tolerance error of 0.1.

# Example: Linear Quadratic Regulator

We consider the following **finite-time horizon** problem with quadratic final cost

$$\begin{aligned} \underset{\pi(\cdot)}{\text{minimize}} \quad & \sum_{t=0}^{T-1} (x_t^* Q x_t + u_t^* R u_t) + x_T^* P_0 x_T \\ \text{s.t.} \quad & x_{t+1} = A x_t + B u_t \\ & x_0 = x, \quad u_t = \pi(\tau_t) \end{aligned}$$

## Value Iteration

$$V(x, 0) = x^* P_0 x$$

$$V(x, 1) = \min_u \left[ \underbrace{x^* Q x + u^* R u}_{C(x, u)} + \underbrace{(A x + B u)^* P_0 (A x + B u)}_{V(f(x, u))} \right]$$

$$\bar{u} = -(B^* P_1 B + R)^{-1} B^* P_0 A x$$

$$V(x, 1) = x^* \underbrace{\left( Q + A^* P_0 A - A^* P_0 B (B^* P_0 B + R)^{-1} B^* P_0 A \right)}_{P_1} x$$

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### Value Iteration

$$V(x, 0) = x^* P_0 x$$

$$V(x, t) = x^* P_t x$$

$$P_{t+1} = Q + A^* P_t A - A^* P_t B (B^* P_t B + R)^{-1} B^* P_t A$$

$$\pi_t^*(x_t) = - \underbrace{(B^* P_t B + R)^{-1} B^* P_{T-t} A}_{K_t} x_t$$

**Infinite-horizon LQR:** Let  $(A, B)$  be stabilizable, NO discount factor

$$\begin{aligned} \underset{\pi(\cdot)}{\text{minimize}} \quad & \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} (x_t^* Q x_t + u_t^* R u_t) \\ \text{s.t.} \quad & x_{t+1} = A x_t + B u_t \\ & x_0 = x, \quad u_t = \pi(\tau_t) \end{aligned}$$

## Value Iteration

1 **Initialization:**  $V_0(x) = 0$ .

2 **Iterative procedure:**

$$V_{k+1}(x) = \min_u [x^* Q x + u^* R u + V_k(x)] = x^* P_k x.$$

Observe that

$$V_k(x) = V(x, T), \quad \text{with } T = k,$$

then

$$V(x) = \lim_{T \rightarrow \infty} V(x, T) \quad (\text{if it exists})$$

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## Example: Linear Quadratic Regulator

**Infinite-horizon LQR:** Let  $(A, B)$  be stabilizable and  $Q, R$  positive definite matrices, NO discount factor

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### Long-time behavior for $V(x, T)$

In [E.-Kouhkhoh-Pighin-Zuazua, 2020], it is proved (in the cont. setting) that

$$V(x, T) - V_s T \rightarrow W(x) + \lambda, \quad \text{as } T \rightarrow \infty,$$

where

$$V_s = \min\{x^* Q x + u^* R u : (x, u) \text{ s.t. } A x + B u = 0\} = 0,$$

and  $W(x) = x^* P x$ , with  $P$  the unique pos. def. sol. to DARE:

$$P = Q + A^* P A - A^* P B (B^* P B + R)^{-1} B^* P A.$$

**Question:** Is it possible to extend this to more general cases?

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If  $V_s \neq 0$ , we can consider a modified cost functional

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