

# Distributed Transactions



# Preliminaries

- Last topic: transactions in a single machine
- This topic: transactions across machines
- Distribution typically addresses two needs:
  - Split the work across multiple nodes
  - Provide more reliability by replication
- Focus of 2PC and 3PC is the first reason: splitting the work across multiple nodes



# Failures

- What are the different classes/types of failures in a distributed system?
- What guarantees should we aim to provide in building fault-tolerant distributed systems?



# Model

- For each distributed transaction T:
  - one coordinator
  - a set of participants
- Coordinator knows participants; participants don't necessarily know each other
- Each process has access to a Distributed Transaction Log (DT Log) on stable storage



# The setup

- Each process  $p_i$  has an input value  $vote_i$ :  
 $vote_i \in \{\text{Yes, No}\}$
- Each process  $p_i$  has output value  $decision_i$ :  
 $decision_i \in \{\text{Commit, Abort}\}$



# Example

- Transfer money from account X on one machine to account Y on another machine



# Atomic Commit Specification

**AC-1:** All processes that reach a decision reach the same one.

**AC-2:** A process cannot reverse its decision after it has reached one.

**AC-3:** The Commit decision can only be reached if all processes vote Yes.

**AC-4:** If there are no failures and all processes vote Yes, then the decision will be Commit.

**AC-5:** If all failures are repaired and there are no more failures, then all processes will eventually decide.



# 2-Phase Commit

Coordinator  $c$

Participant  $p_i$

I. sends VOTE-REQ to all participants

II. sends  $vote_i$  to Coordinator  
if  $vote_i = \text{NO}$  then  
 $decide_i := \text{ABORT}$   
halt

III. if (all votes YES) then  
 $decide_c := \text{COMMIT}$   
send COMMIT to all  
else  
 $decide_c := \text{ABORT}$   
send ABORT to all who voted YES  
halt

IV. if received COMMIT then  
 $decide_i := \text{COMMIT}$   
else  
 $decide_i := \text{ABORT}$   
halt



• How do we deal with different failures?



# Timeout actions

Processes are waiting on steps 2, 3, and 4

**Step 2**  $p_i$  is waiting for VOTE-REQ from coordinator

**Step 3** Coordinator is waiting for vote from participants

**Step 4**  $p_i$  (who voted YES) is waiting for COMMIT or ABORT



# Logging actions

1. When  $c$  sends VOTE-REQ, it writes START-2PC to its DT Log
2. When  $p_i$  is ready to vote YES,
  - $p_i$  writes YES to DT Log
  - $p_i$  sends YES to  $c$  ( $p_i$  writes also list of participants)
3. When  $p_i$  is ready to vote NO, it writes ABORT to DT Log
4. When  $c$  is ready to decide COMMIT, it writes COMMIT to DT Log before sending COMMIT to participants
5. When  $c$  is ready to decide ABORT, it writes ABORT to DT Log
6. After  $p_i$  receives decision value, it writes it to DT Log



# $p$ recovers

1. When coordinator sends VOTE-REQ, it writes START-2PC to its DT Log
  2. When participant is ready to vote Yes, writes Yes to DT Log before sending yes to coordinator (writes also list of participants)  
When participant is ready to vote No, it writes ABORT to DT Log
  3. When coordinator is ready to decide COMMIT, it writes COMMIT to DT Log before sending COMMIT to participants  
When coordinator is ready to decide ABORT, it writes ABORT to DT Log
  4. After participant receives decision value, it writes it to DT Log
- if DT Log contains START-2PC, then  $p = c$ :
    - if DT Log contains a decision value, then decide accordingly
    - else decide ABORT
  - otherwise,  $p$  is a participant:
    - if DT Log contains a decision value, then decide accordingly
    - else if it does not contain a Yes vote, decide ABORT
    - else (Yes but no decision) run a termination protocol



# Termination protocols

I. Wait for coordinator to recover

- It always works, since the coordinator is never uncertain

- may block recovering process unnecessarily

II. Ask other participants



• What are the strengths/weaknesses of 2PC?



# Key Insight for 3-PC

- Cannot abort unless we know that no one has committed
- We need an algorithm that lets us infer the state of failed nodes
  - Introduce an additional state that helps us in our reasoning
  - But start with the assumption that there are no communication failures



# 3-Phase Commit

- Two approaches:

1. Focus only on site failures

- Non-blocking, unless all sites fails
- Timeout  $\equiv$  site at the other end failed
- Communication failures can produce inconsistencies

2. Tolerate both site and communication failures

- partial failures can still cause blocking, but less often than in 2PC



# Blocking and uncertainty

Why does uncertainty lead to blocking?

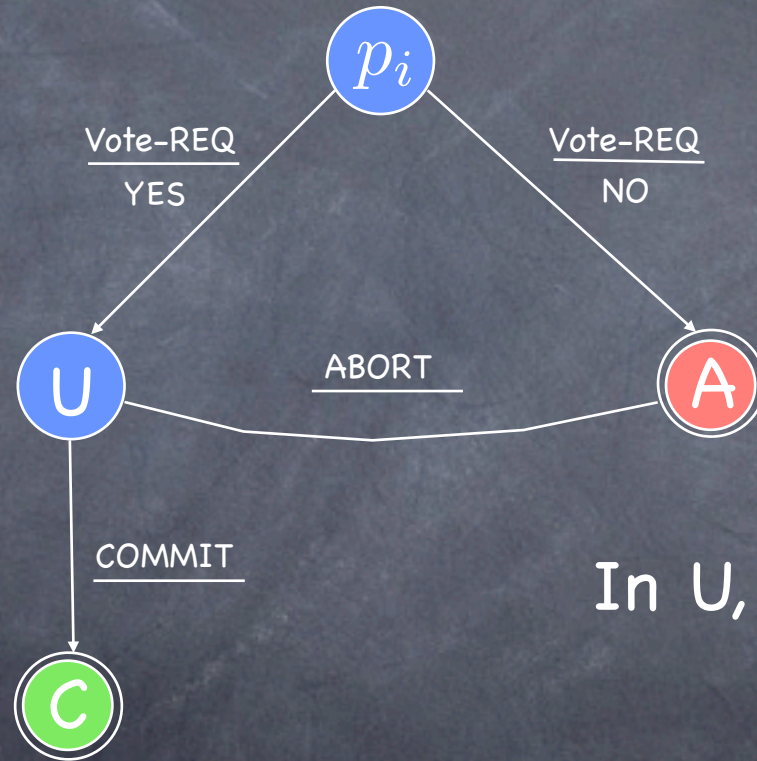
- An uncertain process does not know whether it can safely decide COMMIT or ABORT because some of the processes it cannot reach could have decided either

Non-blocking Property

If any operational process is uncertain, then no process has decided COMMIT



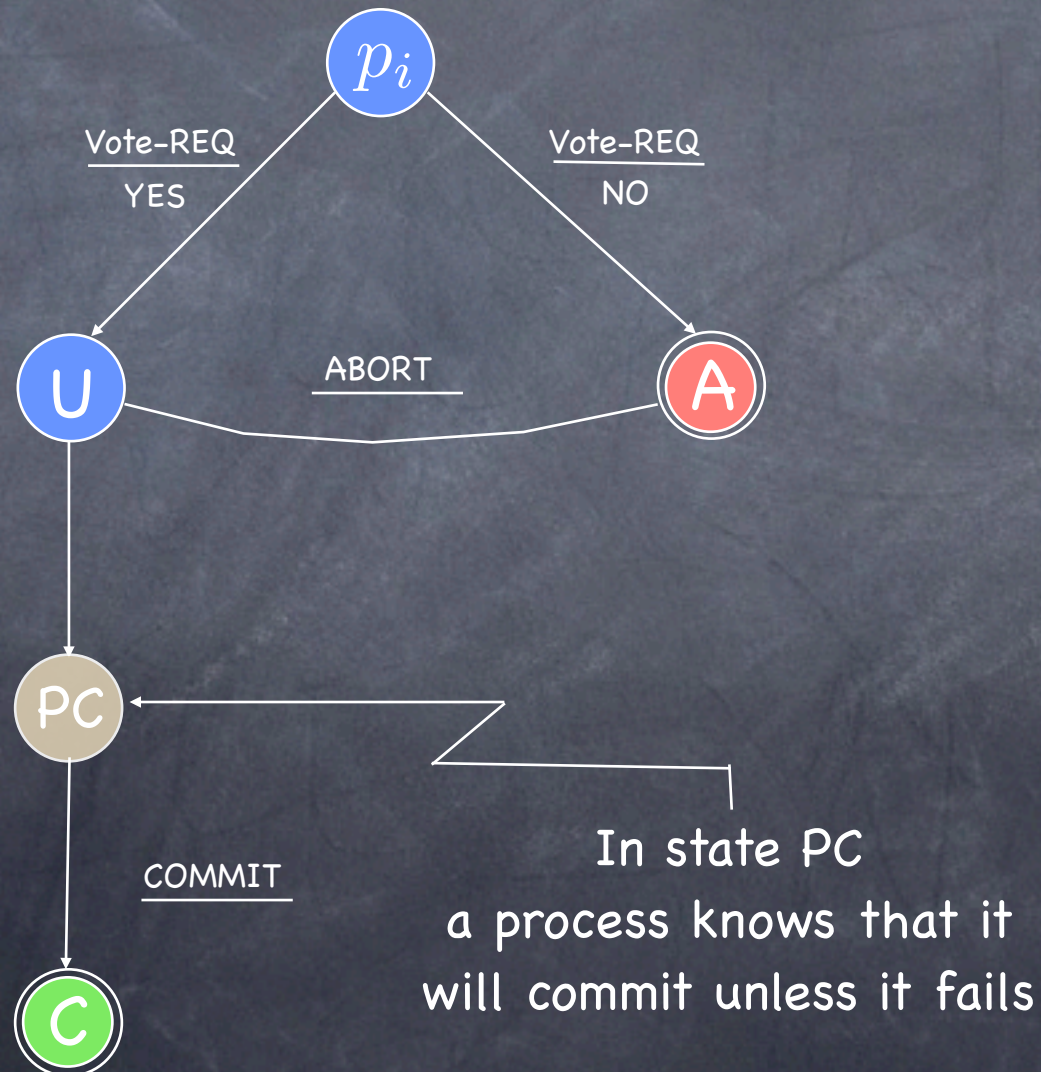
# 2PC Revisited



In U, both A and C are reachable!



# 2PC Revisited





# 3PC: The Protocol

Dale Skeen (1982)

- I.  $c$  sends VOTE-REQ to all participants.
- II. When  $p_i$  receives a VOTE-REQ, it responds by sending a vote to  $c$   
if  $vote_i = \text{No}$ , then  $decide_i := \text{ABORT}$  and  $p_i$  halts.
- III.  $c$  collects votes from all.  
if all votes are Yes, then  $c$  sends PRECOMMIT to all  
else  $decide_c := \text{ABORT}$ ; sends ABORT to all who voted Yes halts
- IV. if  $p_i$  receives PRECOMMIT then it sends ACK to  $c$
- V.  $c$  collects ACKs from all.  
When all ACKs have been received,  $decide_c := \text{COMMIT}$ ;  
 $c$  sends COMMIT to all.
- VI. When  $p_i$  receives COMMIT,  $p_i$  sets  $decide_i := \text{COMMIT}$  and halts.



# Termination protocol: Process states

At any time while running 3 PC, each participant can be in exactly one of these 4 states:

**Aborted**      Not voted, voted NO, received ABORT

**Uncertain**      Voted YES, not received PRECOMMIT

**Committable**      Received PRECOMMIT, not COMMIT

**Committed**      Received COMMIT



# Not all states are compatible

	Aborted	Uncertain	Committable	Committed
Aborted	Y	Y	N	N
Uncertain	Y	Y	Y	N
Committable	N	Y	Y	Y
Committed	N	N	Y	Y



# Timeout Actions

Processes are waiting on steps 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6

**Step 2**  $p_i$  is waiting for VOTE-REQ from coordinator

**Step 3** Coordinator is waiting for vote from participants

**Step 4**  $p_i$  waits for PRECOMMIT

**Step 5** Coordinator waits for ACKs

**Step 6**  $p_i$  waits for COMMIT



# Timeout Actions

Processes are waiting on steps 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6

<p><b>Step 2</b> <math>p_i</math> is waiting for VOTE-REQ from coordinator</p> <p>Exactly as in 2PC</p>	<p><b>Step 3</b> Coordinator is waiting for vote from participants</p> <p>Exactly as in 2PC</p>
<p><b>Step 4</b> <math>p_i</math> waits for PRECOMMIT</p> <p>Run some Termination protocol</p>	<p><b>Step 5</b> Coordinator waits for ACKs</p> <p>Coordinator sends COMMIT</p>
<p><b>Step 6</b> <math>p_i</math> waits for COMMIT</p> <p>Run some Termination protocol</p>	



# Termination protocol

- When  $p_i$  times out, it starts an election protocol to elect a new coordinator
  - The new coordinator sends STATE-REQ to all processes that participated in the election
  - The new coordinator collects the states and follows a **termination rule**
- TR1.** if some process decided ABORT, then?
  - TR2.** if some process decided COMMIT, then?
  - TR3.** if all processes that reported state are uncertain, then?
  - TR4.** if some process is committable, but none committed, then?



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- TR1.** if some process decided ABORT, then
    - decide ABORT
    - send ABORT to all
    - halt
  - TR2.** if some process decided COMMIT, then
    - decide COMMIT
    - send COMMIT to all
    - halt
  - TR3.** if all processes that reported state are uncertain, then
    - decide ABORT
    - send ABORT to all
    - halt
  - TR4.** if some process is committable, but none committed, then
    - send PRECOMMIT to uncertain processes
    - wait for ACKs
    - send COMMIT to all
    - halt



# Discussion

- What are the strengths/weaknesses of 3PC?