

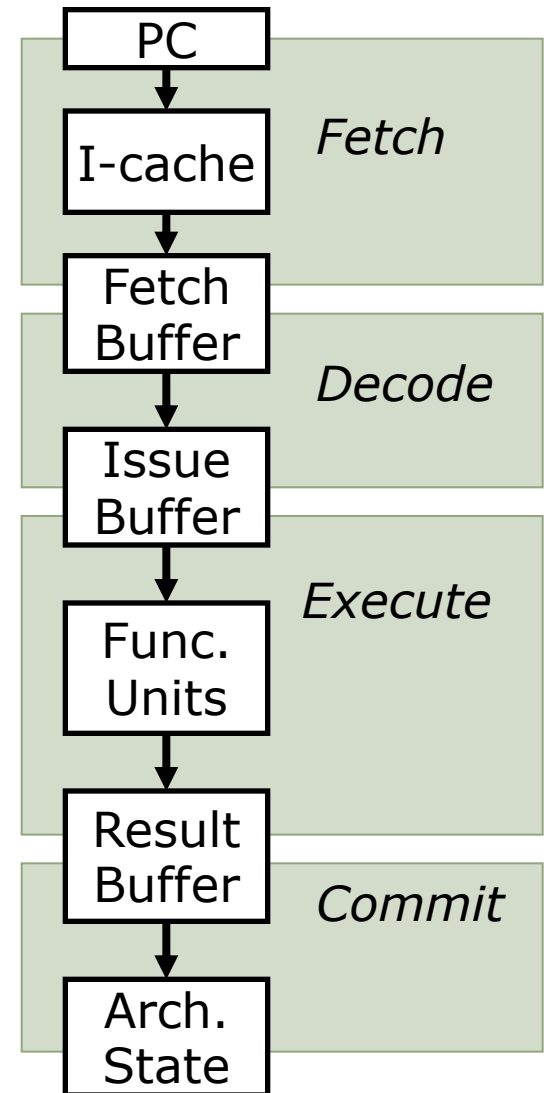
Branch Prediction

Joel Emer

Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory
M.I.T.

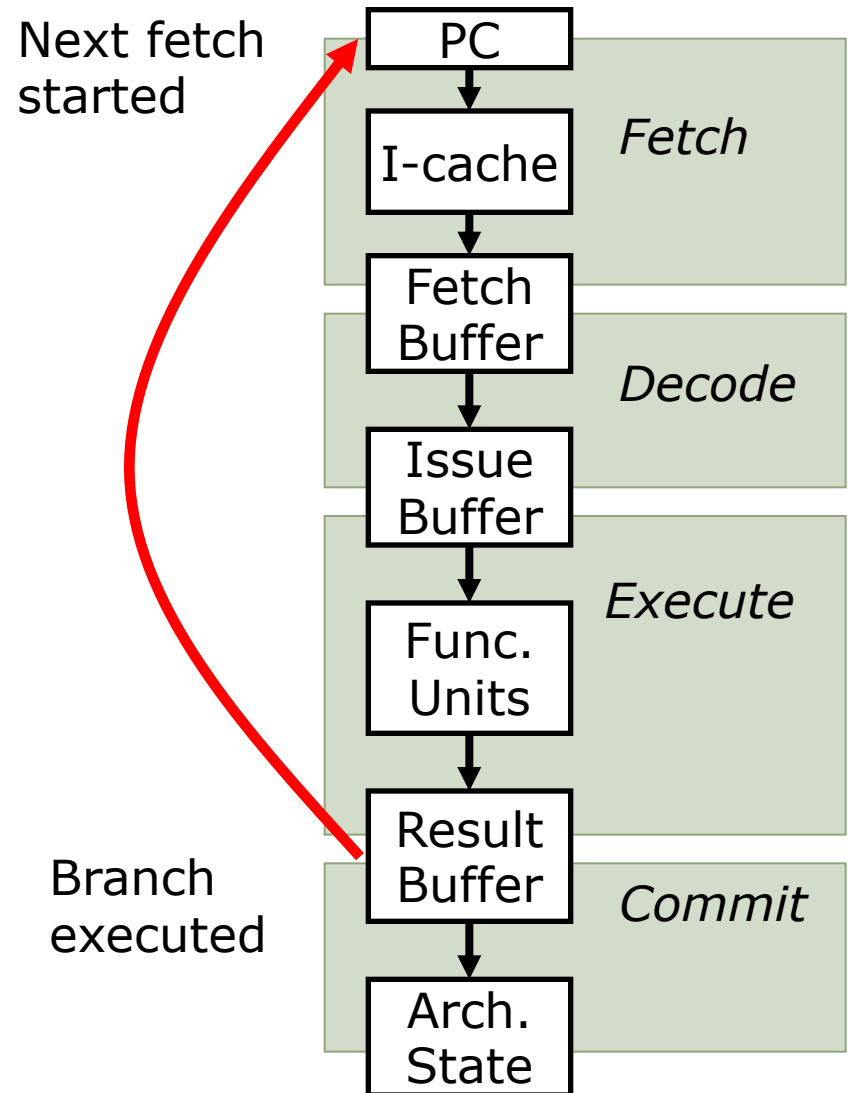
Control Flow Penalty

*Modern processors may have
> 10 pipeline stages between
next PC calculation and branch
resolution!*



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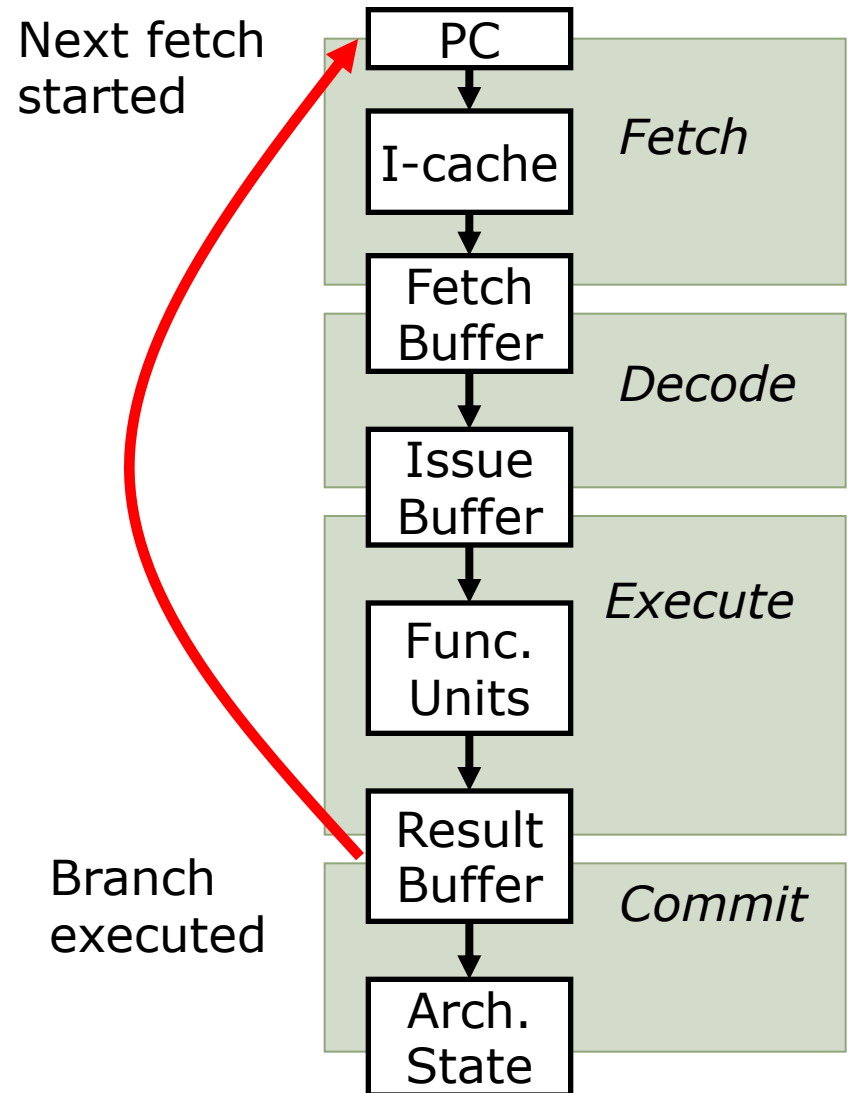
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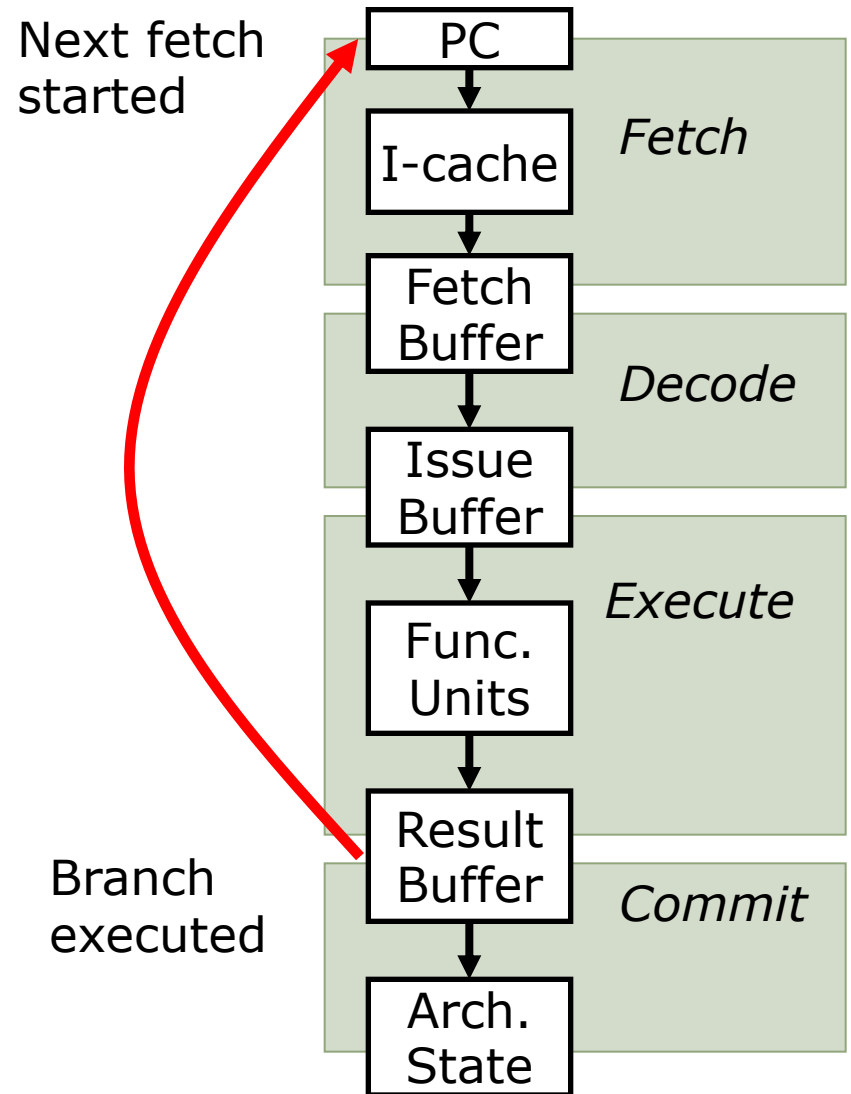


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~ Loop length x pipeline width

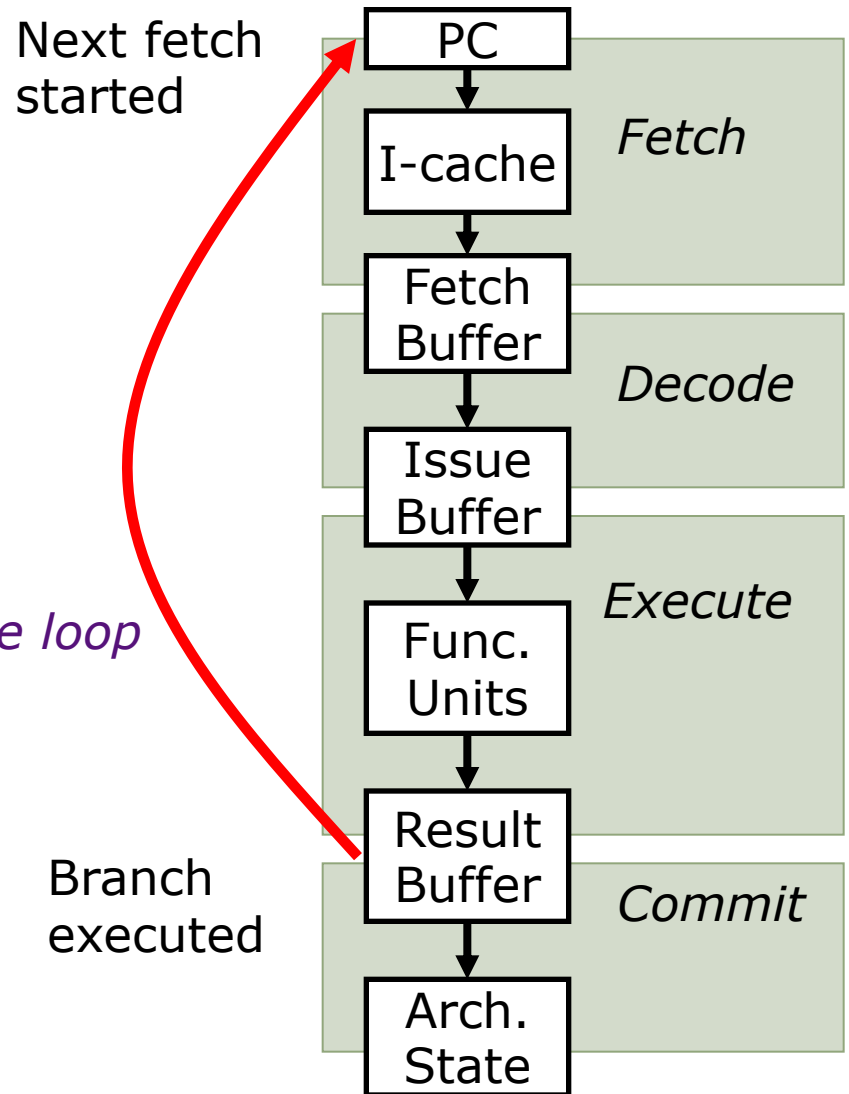


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Average Run-Length between Branches

Average dynamic instruction mix of SPEC CPU 2017
[[Limaye and Adegbiya, ISPASS'18](#)]:

	SPECint	SPECfp
Branches	19 %	11 %
Loads	24 %	26 %
Stores	10 %	7 %
Other	47 %	56 %

SPECint17: *perlbench, gcc, mcf, omnetpp, xalancbmk, x264, deepsjeng, leela, exchange2, xz*

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What is the average run length between branches?

Roughly 5-10 instructions

MIPS Branches and Jumps

Each instruction fetch depends on one or two pieces of information from the preceding instruction:

- 1) Is the preceding instruction a taken branch?
- 2) If so, what is the target address?

<i>Instruction</i>	<i>Taken known?</i>	<i>Target known?</i>
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JR		
BEQZ/BNEZ		

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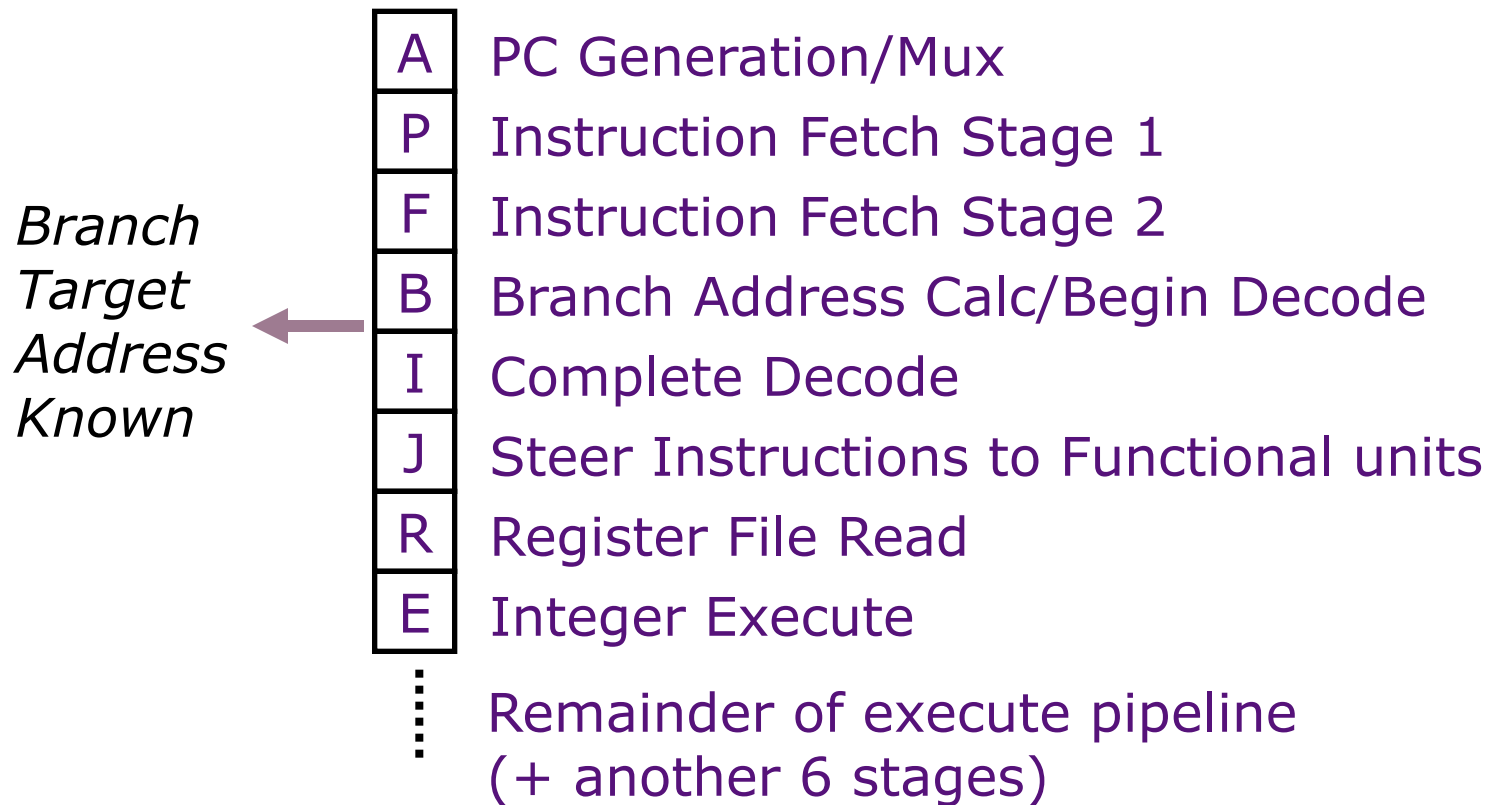
Example Branch Penalties

UltraSPARC-III instruction fetch pipeline stages
(in-order issue, 4-way superscalar, 750MHz, 2000)

A	PC Generation/Mux
P	Instruction Fetch Stage 1
F	Instruction Fetch Stage 2
B	Branch Address Calc/Begin Decode
I	Complete Decode
J	Steer Instructions to Functional units
R	Register File Read
E	Integer Execute
⋮	Remainder of execute pipeline (+ another 6 stages)

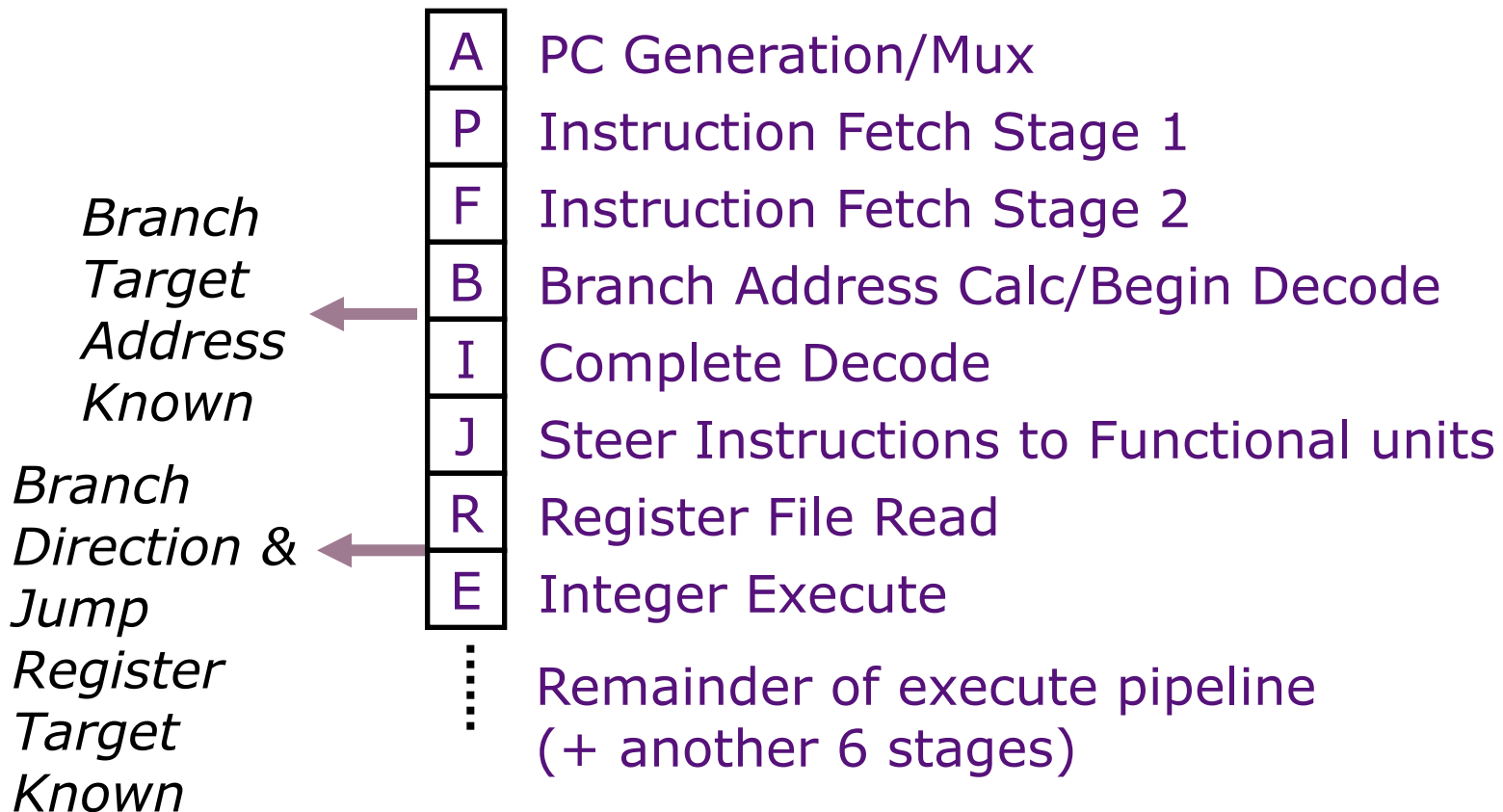
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Reducing Control Flow Penalty

- Software solutions
 - *Eliminate branches – loop unrolling*
Increases run length between branches

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 - *Reduce resolution time – instruction scheduling*
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(of limited value)
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 - Change architecture – find something else to do
 - Delay slots* – replace pipeline bubbles with useful work
(requires software cooperation)

Reducing Control Flow Penalty

- Software solutions

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Increases run length between branches

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- *Speculate – branch prediction*

Speculative execution of instructions beyond the branch

Branch Prediction

Motivation:

Branch penalties limit performance of deeply pipelined processors

Modern branch predictors have high accuracy (>95%) and can reduce branch penalties significantly

Required hardware support:

Prediction structures:

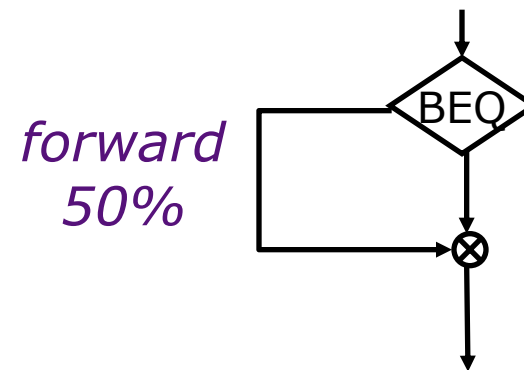
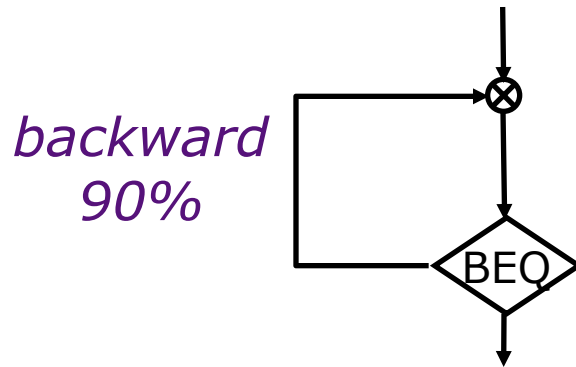
- Branch history tables, branch target buffers, etc.

Mispredict recovery mechanisms:

- *Keep result computation separate from commit*
- Kill instructions following branch in pipeline
- Restore state to state following branch

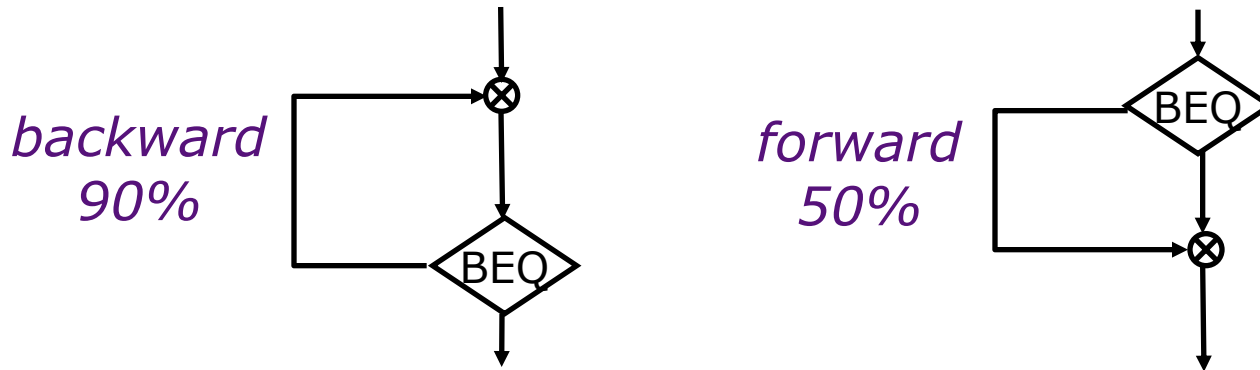
Static Branch Prediction

Overall probability a branch is taken is $\sim 60-70\%$ but:



Static Branch Prediction

Overall probability a branch is taken is ~60-70% but:

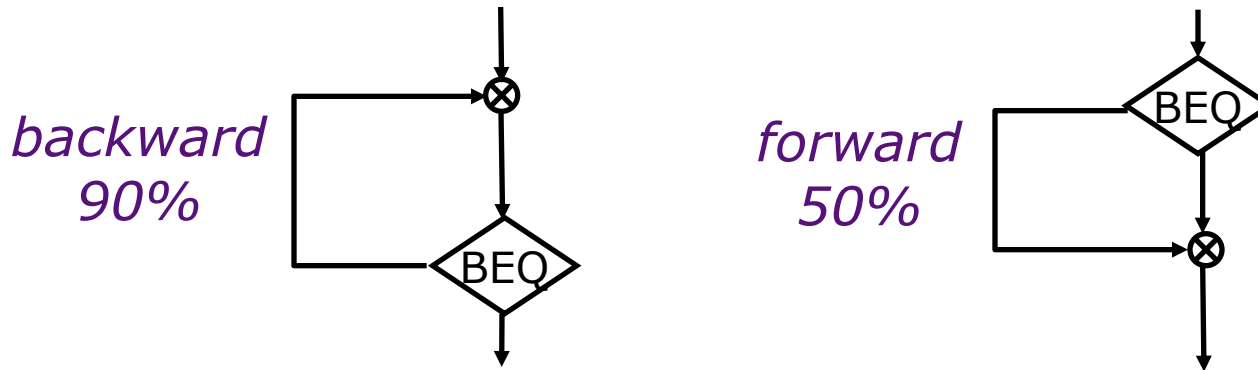


ISA can attach preferred direction semantics to branches,
e.g., Motorola MC88110

bne0 (preferred taken) beq0 (not taken)

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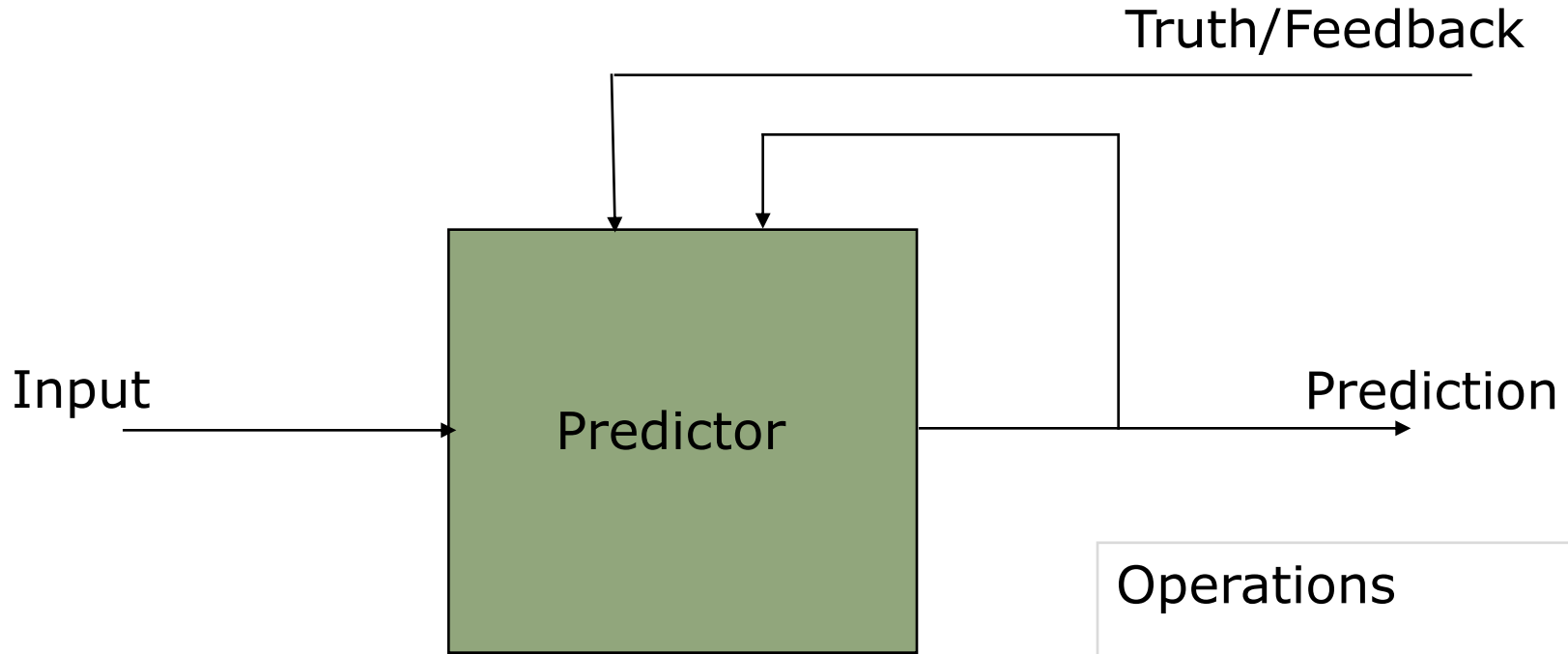
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ISA can allow arbitrary choice of statically predicted direction,
e.g., HP PA-RISC, Intel IA-64

typically reported as $\sim 80\%$ accurate

Dynamic Prediction



Prediction as a feedback control process

Operations

- Predict
- Update

Dynamic Branch Prediction

Learning based on past behavior

Temporal correlation

The way a branch resolves may be a good predictor of the way it will resolve at the next execution

Spatial correlation

Several branches may resolve in a highly correlated manner (*a preferred path of execution*)

Predictor Primitive

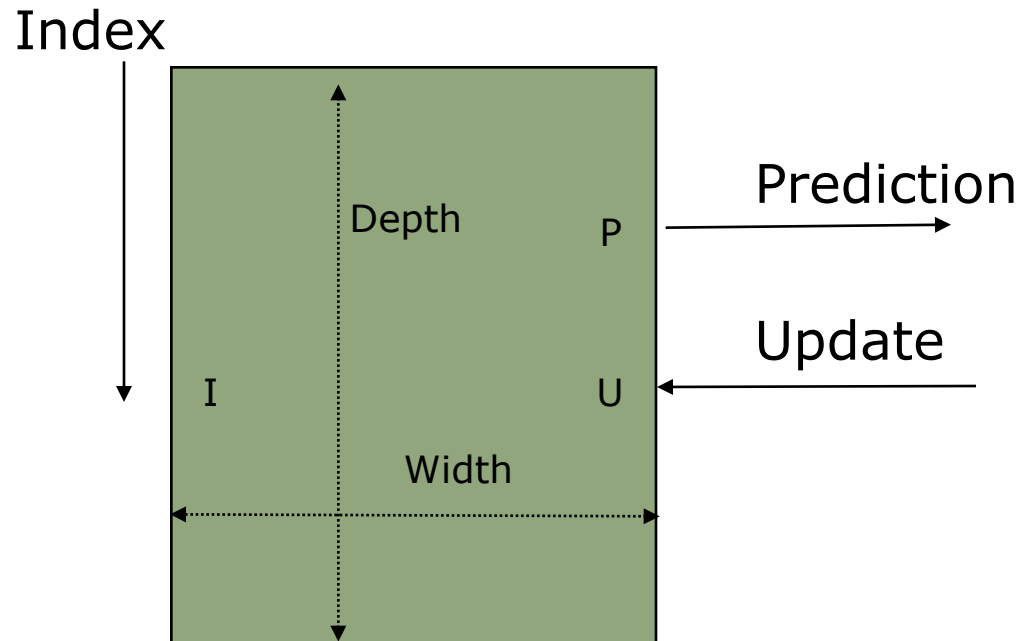
Emer & Gloy, 1997

- Indexed table holding values

- Operations

- Predict
- Update

- Algebraic notation

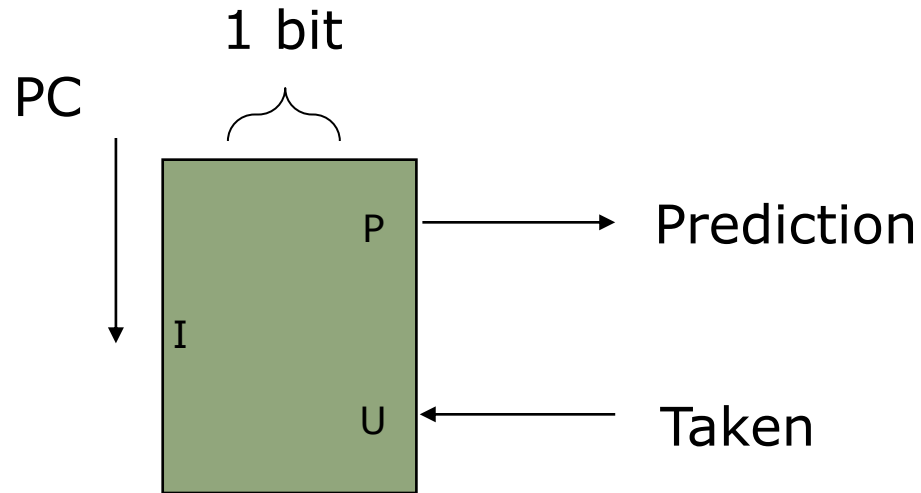


$$\text{Prediction} = P[\text{Width}, \text{Depth}](\text{Index}; \text{Update})$$

One-bit Predictor

aka Branch History Table (BHT)

Simple temporal prediction



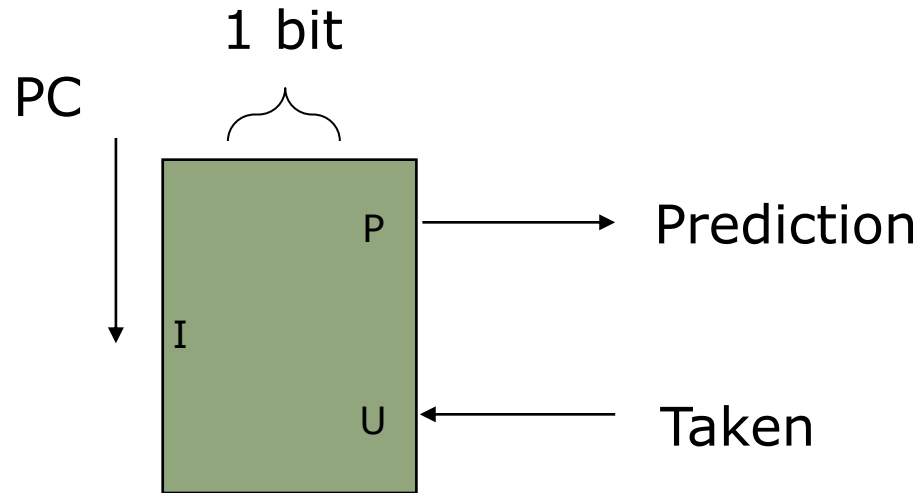
$$A_{21064}(PC; T) = P[1, 2K](PC; T)$$

What happens on loop branches?

One-bit Predictor

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Simple temporal prediction



$$A_{21064}(PC; T) = P[1, 2K](PC; T)$$

What happens on loop branches?

At best, mispredicts twice for every use of loop

Two-bit Predictor

Smith, 1981

- Use two bits per entry instead of one bit
- Manage them as a saturating counter:

On not-taken ↕	↗ On taken	1	1	Strongly taken
		1	0	Weakly taken
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- Direction prediction changes only after two wrong predictions

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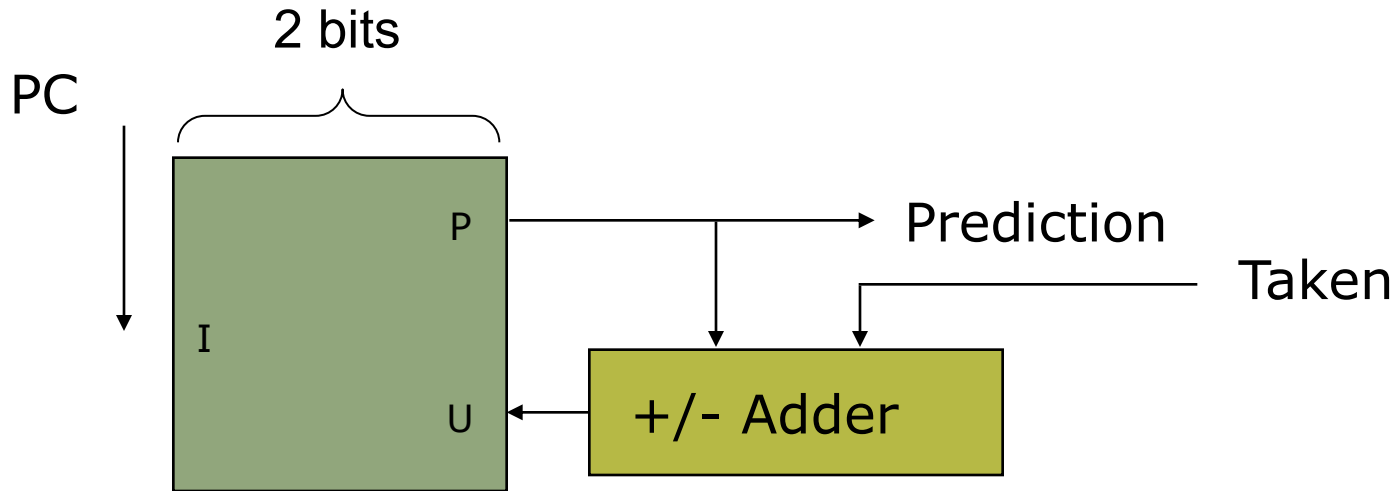
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How many mispredictions per loop? 1

Two-bit Predictor

Smith, 1981



$\text{Counter}[W,D](I; T) = P[W, D](I; \text{if } T \text{ then } P+1 \text{ else } P-1)$

$A21164(PC; T) = \text{MSB}(\text{Counter}[2, 2K](PC; T))$

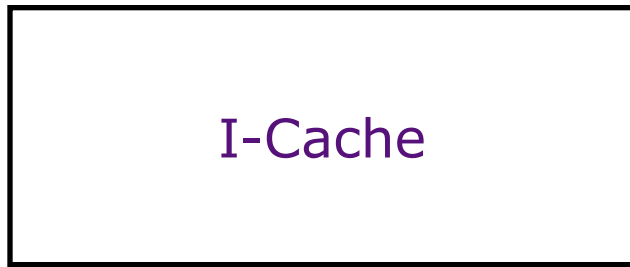
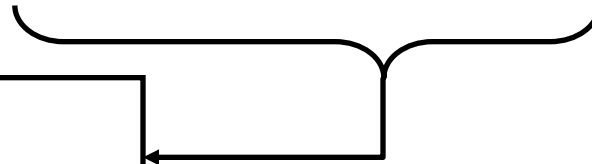
Branch History Table

Fetch PC

	0,0
--	-----

Branch History Table

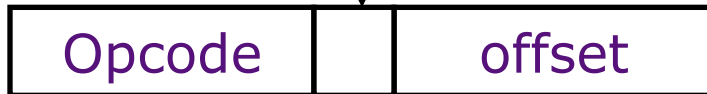
Fetch PC



I-Cache



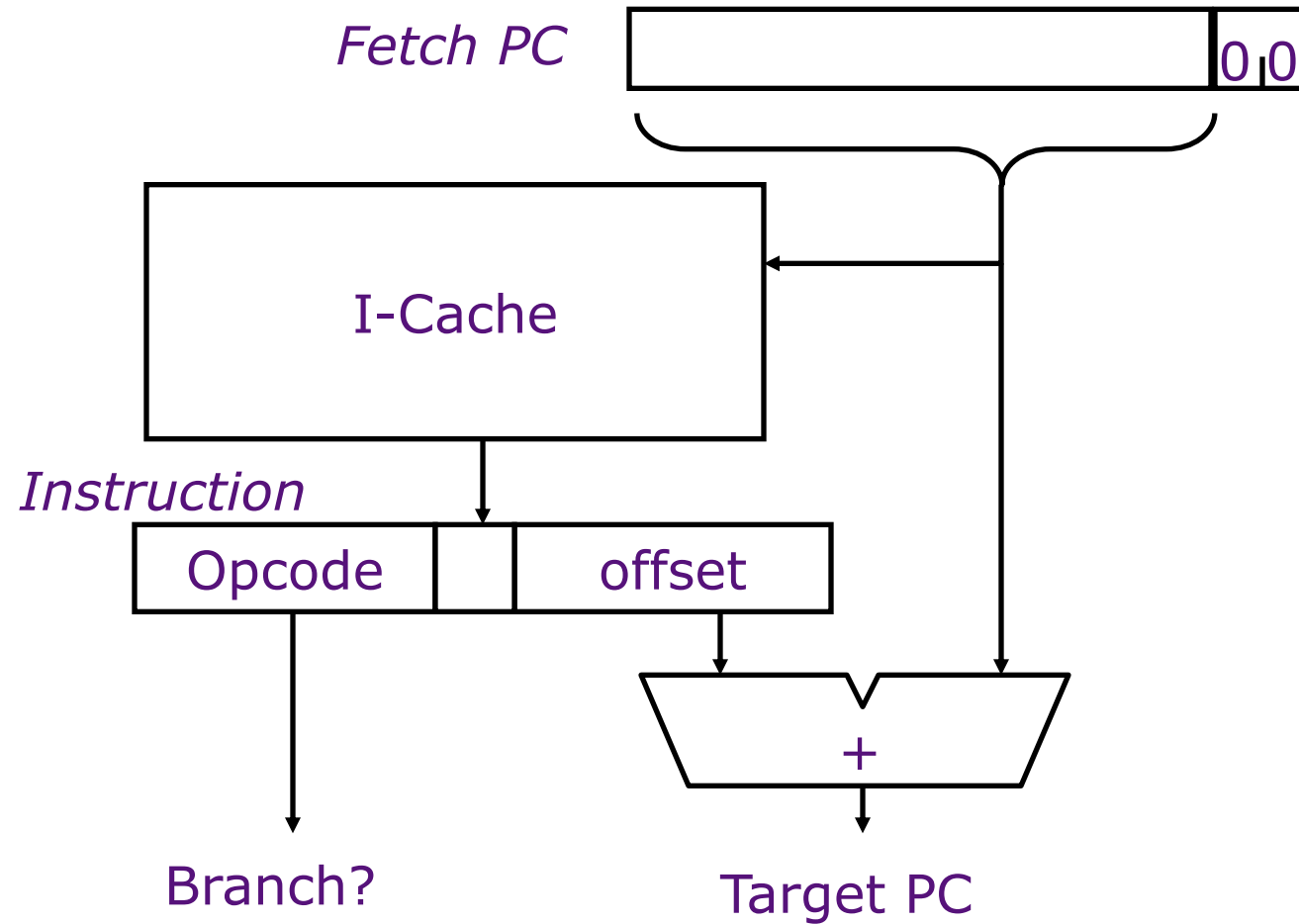
Instruction



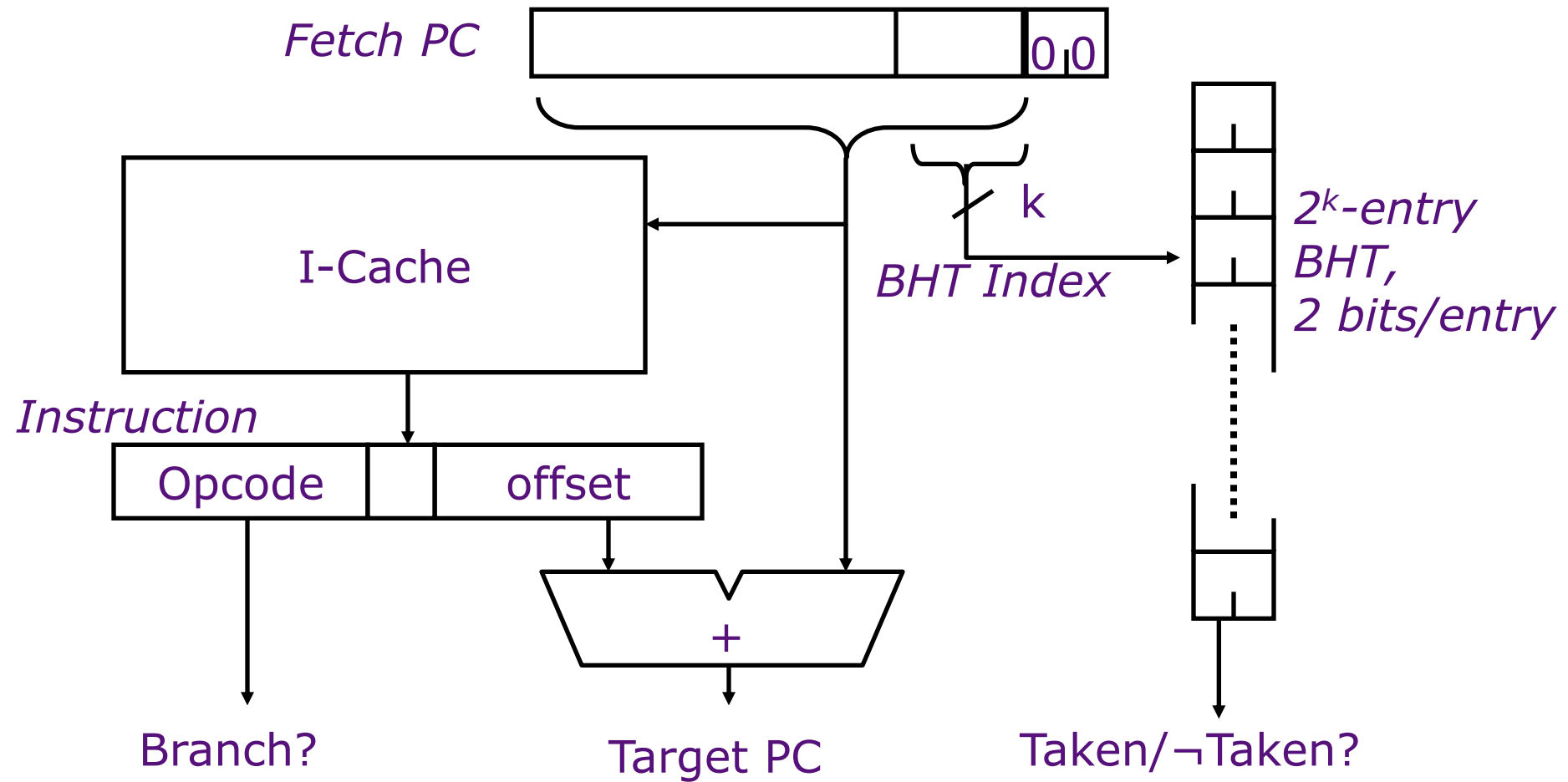
Opcode

offset

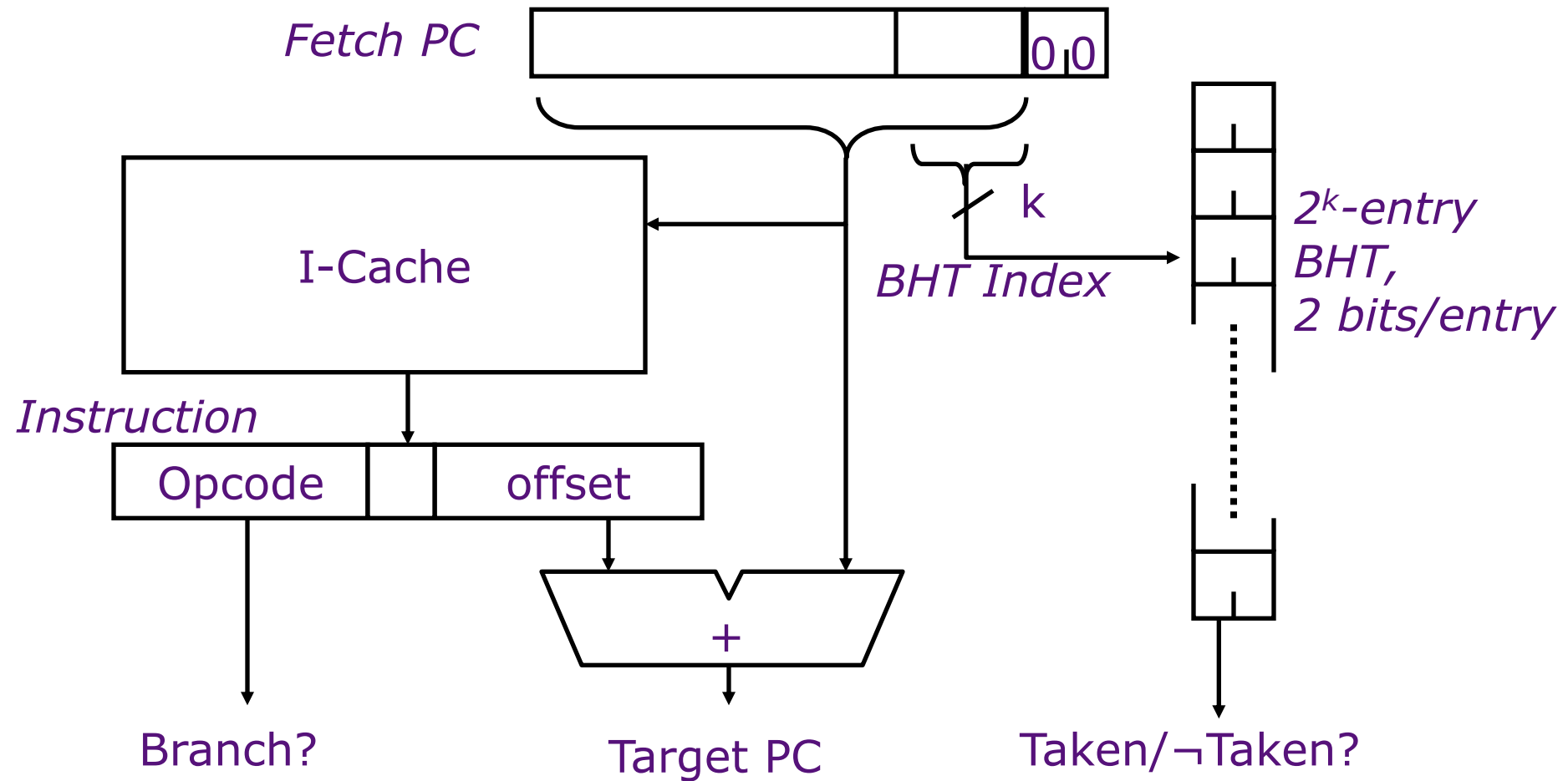
Branch History Table



Branch History Table



Branch History Table



4K-entry BHT, 2 bits/entry, ~80-90% correct predictions

Exploiting Spatial Correlation

Yeh and Patt, 1992

```
if (x[i] < 7) then
    y += 1;
if (x[i] < 5) then
    c -= 4;
```

If first condition false, second condition also false

Exploiting Spatial Correlation

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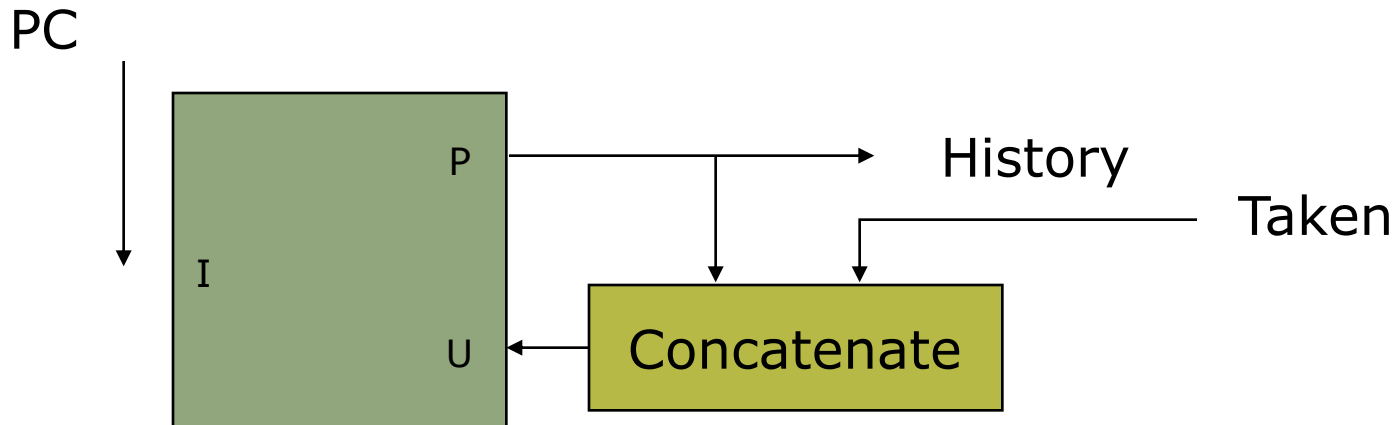
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History register records the direction of the last N branches executed by the processor

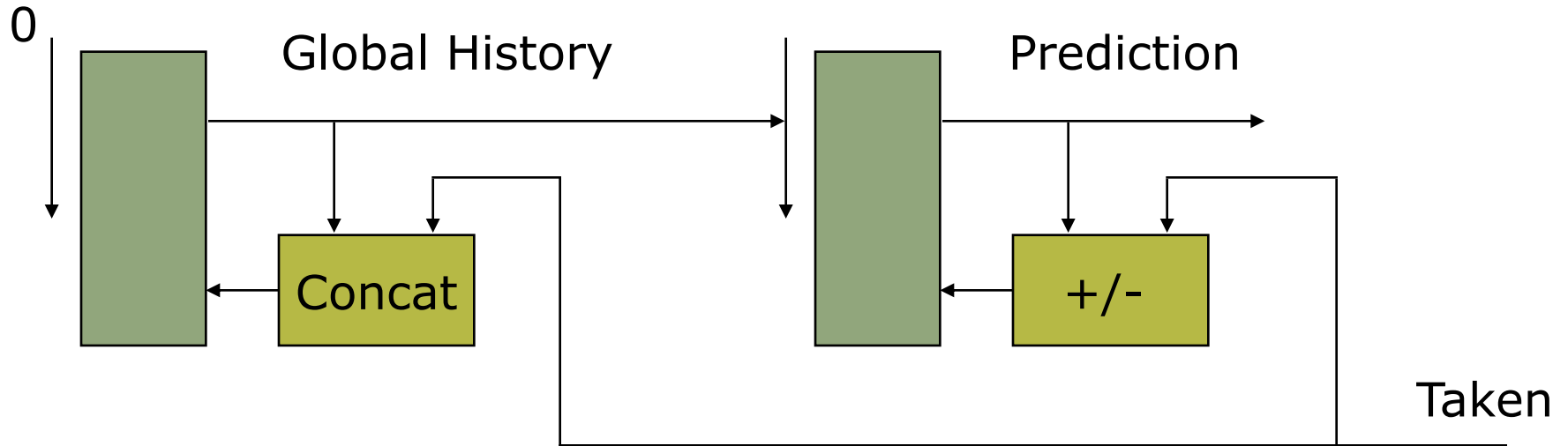
History Registers

aka Pattern History Table (PHT)



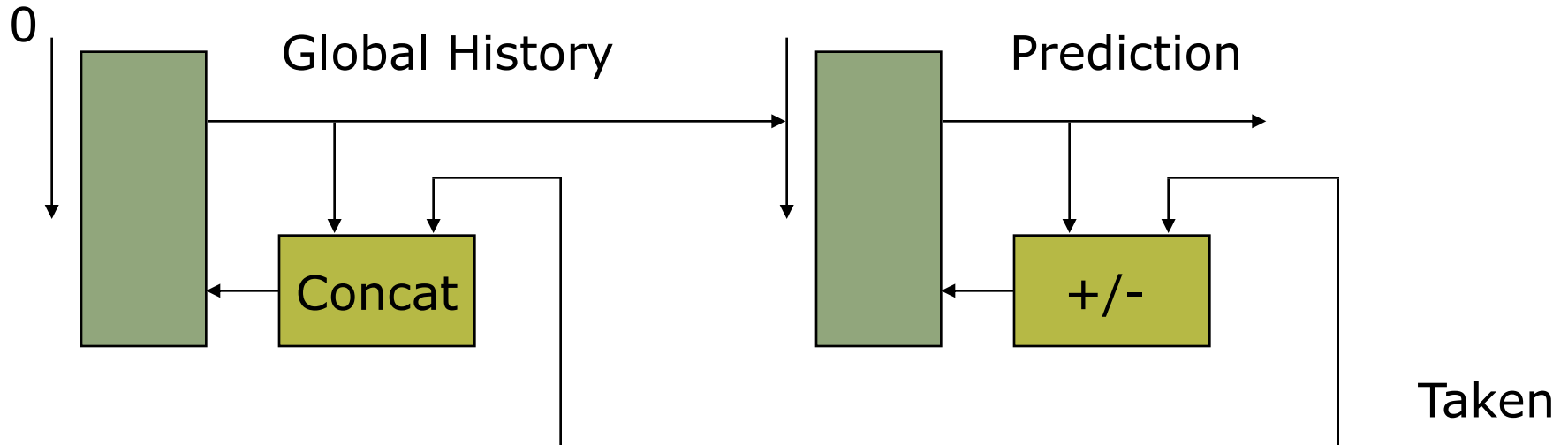
$$\text{History}(\text{PC}; T) = P(\text{PC}; P \parallel T)$$

Global-History Predictor



$$\text{GHist}(;T) = \text{MSB}(\text{Counter}(\text{History}(0, T); T))$$

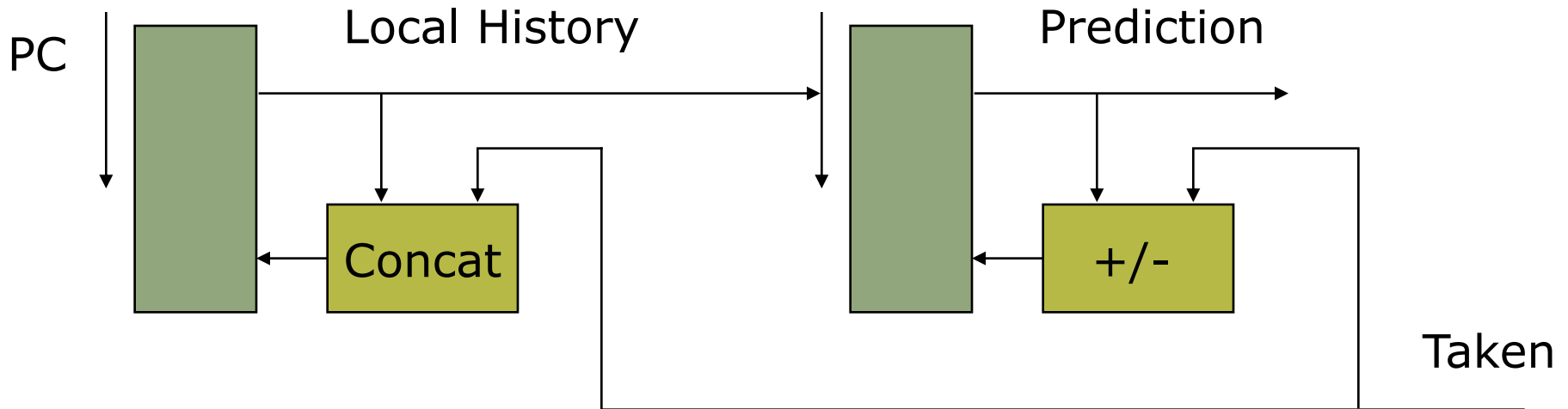
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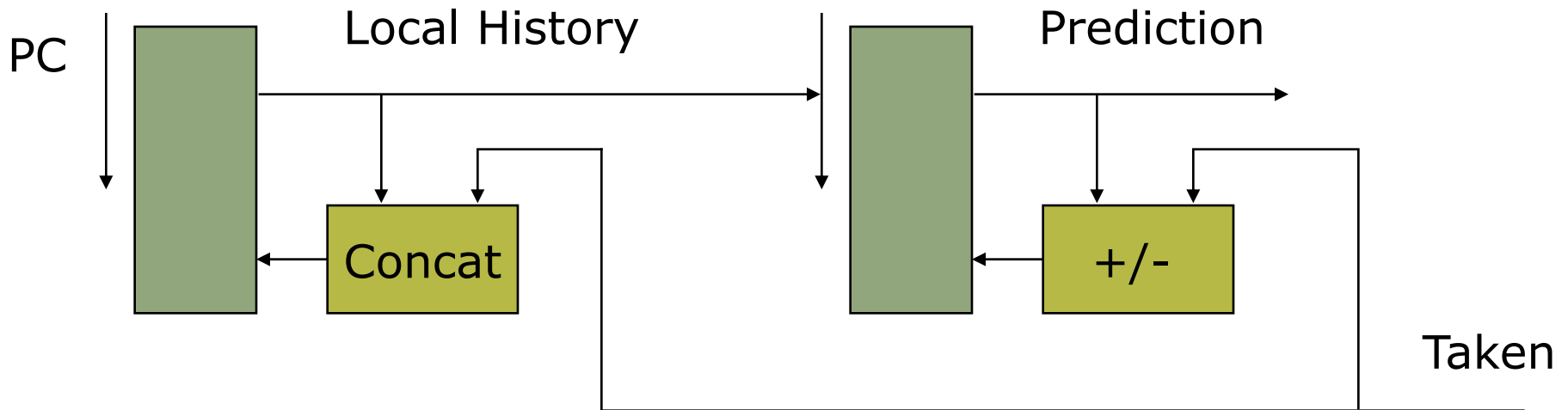
Can we take advantage of a pattern at a particular PC?

Local-History Predictor



$$\text{LHist}(\text{PC}; T) = \text{MSB}(\text{Counter}(\text{History}(\text{PC}; T); T))$$

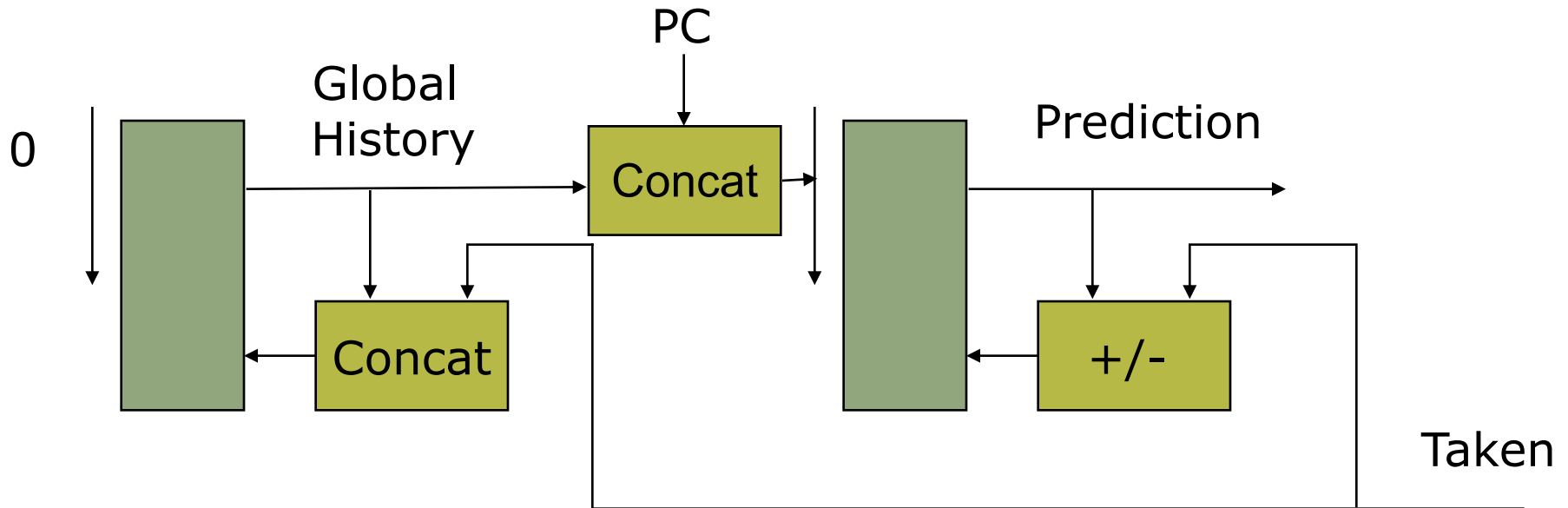
Local-History Predictor



$$\text{LHist}(\text{PC}; T) = \text{MSB}(\text{Counter}(\text{History}(\text{PC}; T); T))$$

Can we take advantage of the global pattern at a particular PC?

Global-History Predictor with Per-PC Counters

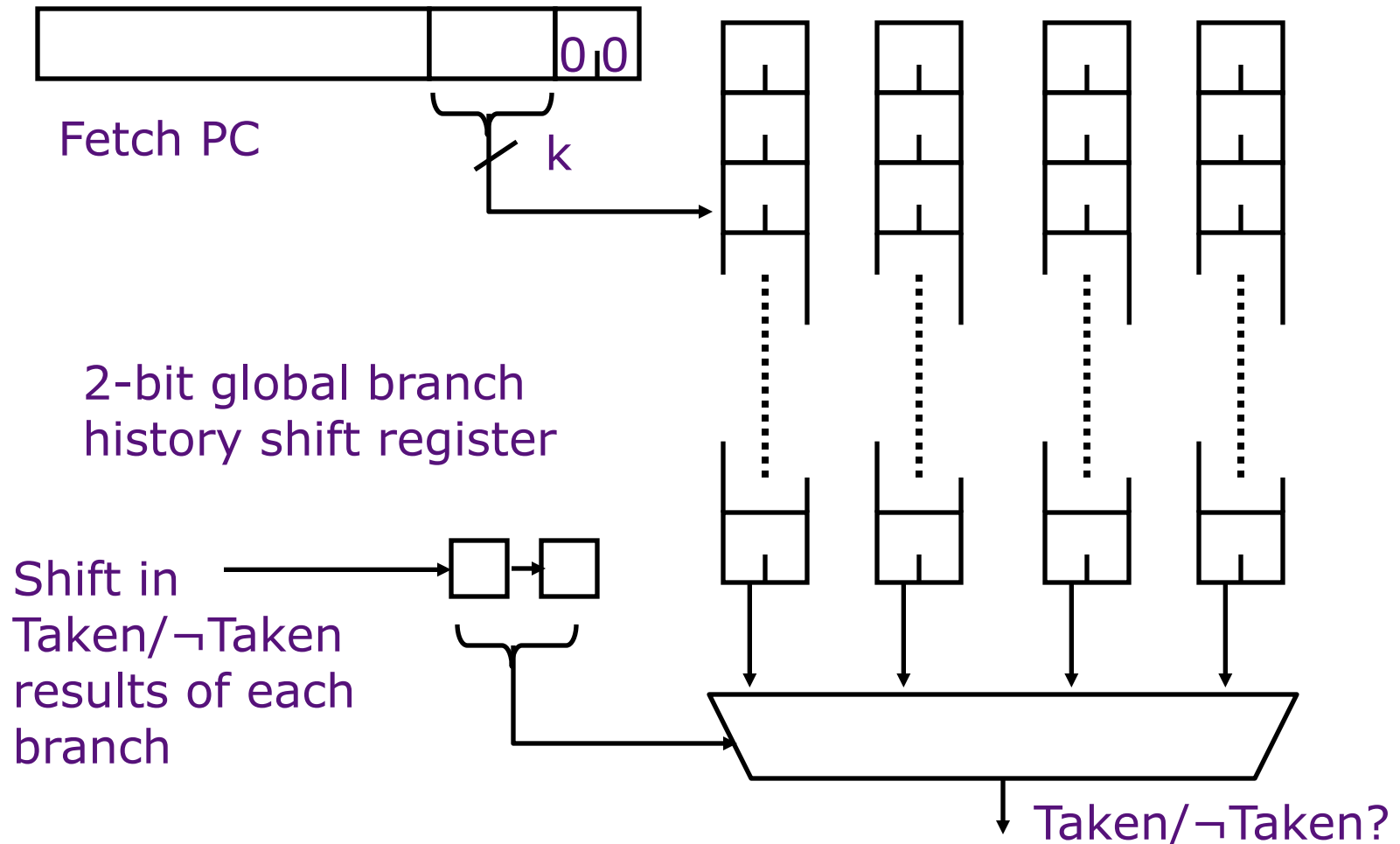


$$\text{GHistPA}(\text{PC}; T) = \text{MSB}(\text{Counter}(\text{History}(0; T) || \text{PC}; T))$$

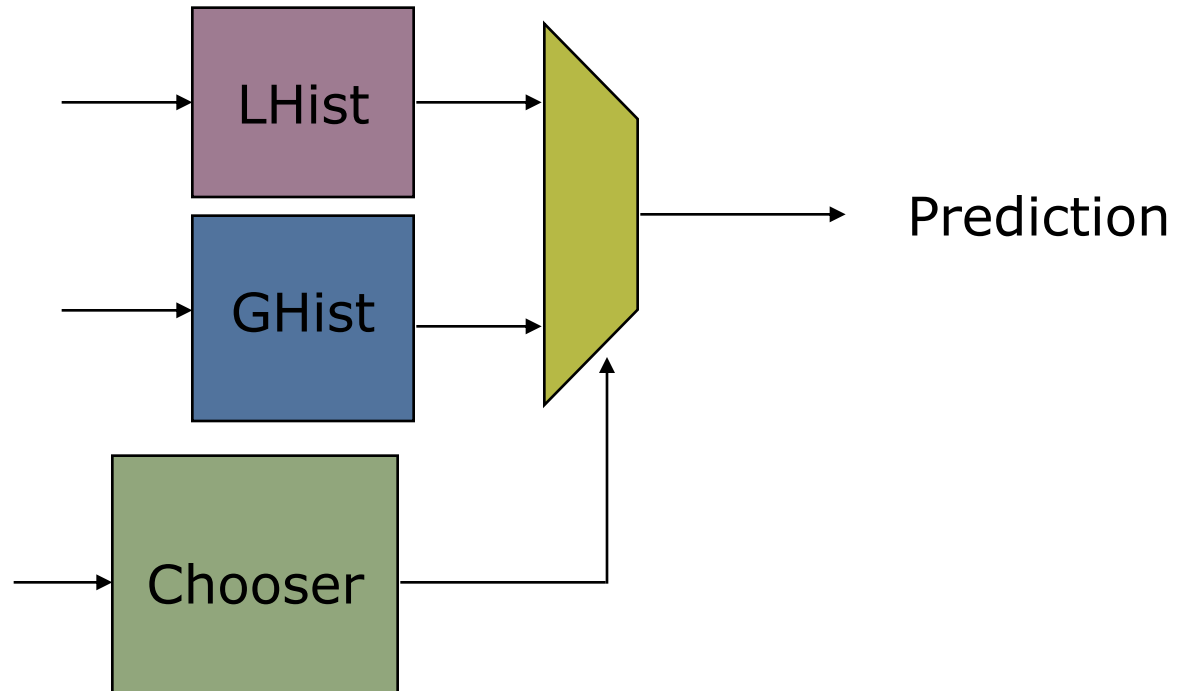
Two-Level Branch Predictor

(Pentium Pro, 1995)

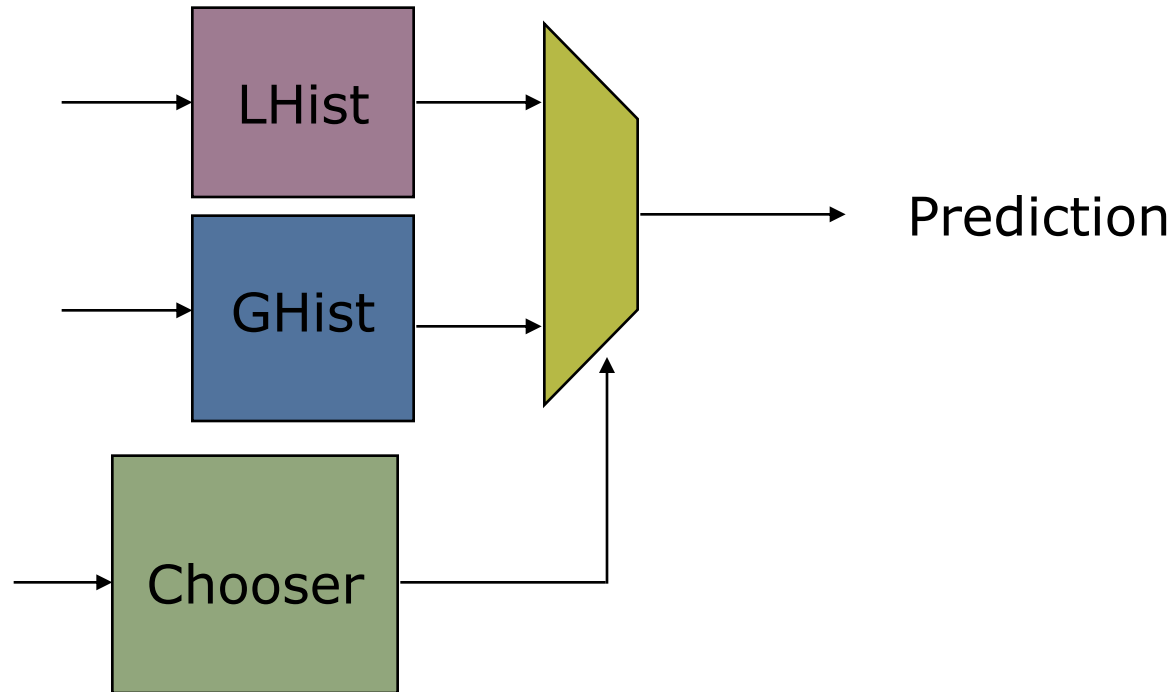
Pentium Pro uses the result from the last two branches to select one of the four sets of BHT bits (~95% correct)



Choosing Predictors



Choosing Predictors



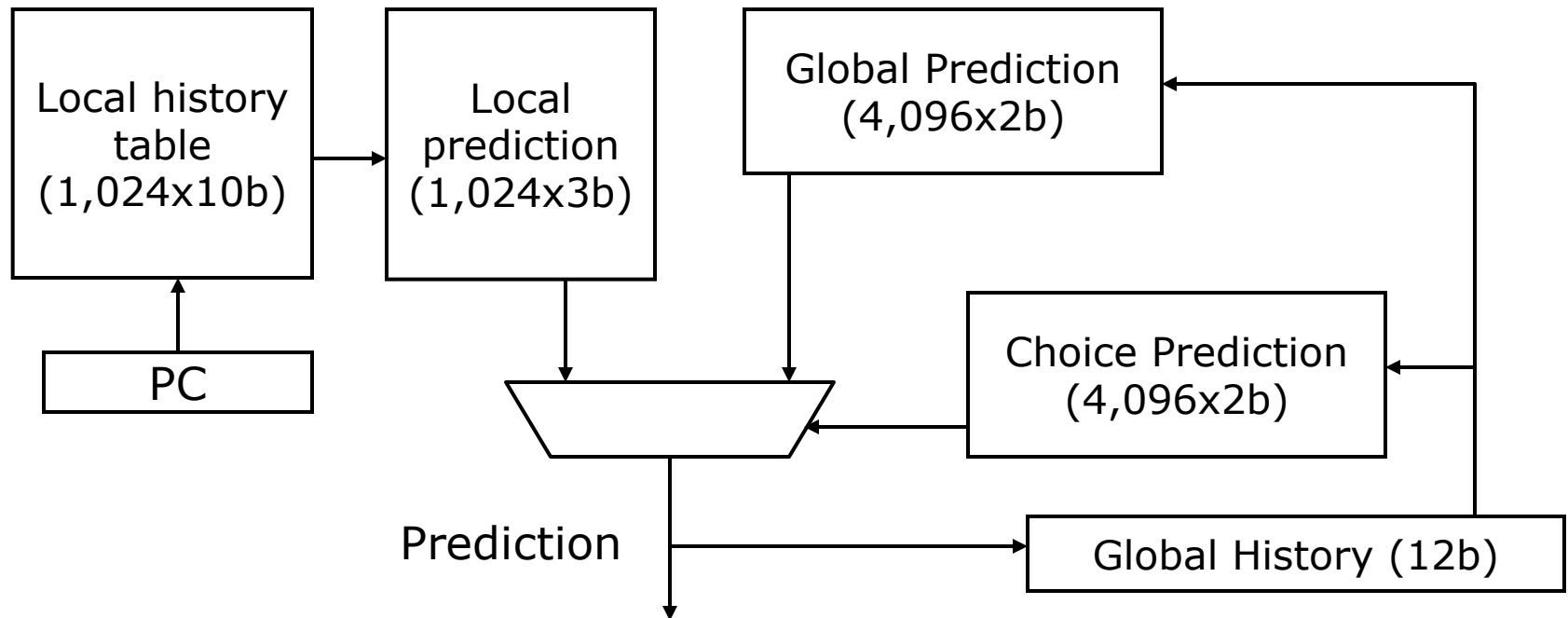
$$\text{Chooser} = \text{MSB}(P(\text{PC}; P + (A==T) - (B==T)))$$

or

$$\text{Chooser} = \text{MSB}(P(\text{GHist}(\text{PC}; T); P + (A==T) - (B==T)))$$

Tournament Branch Predictor

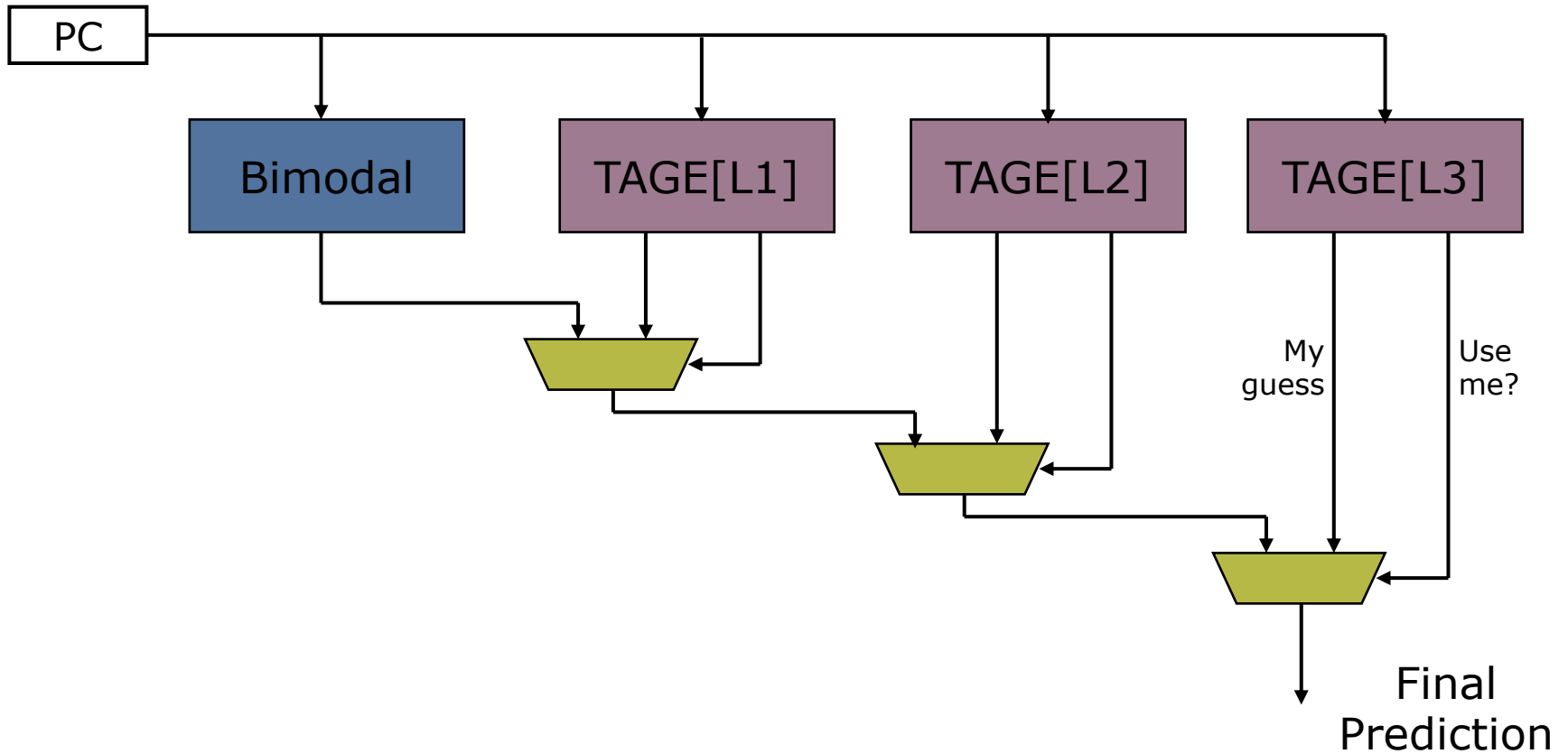
(Alpha 21264, 1996)



- Choice predictor learns whether best to use local or global branch history in predicting next branch
- Global history is speculatively updated but restored on mispredict
- Claim 90-100% success on range of applications

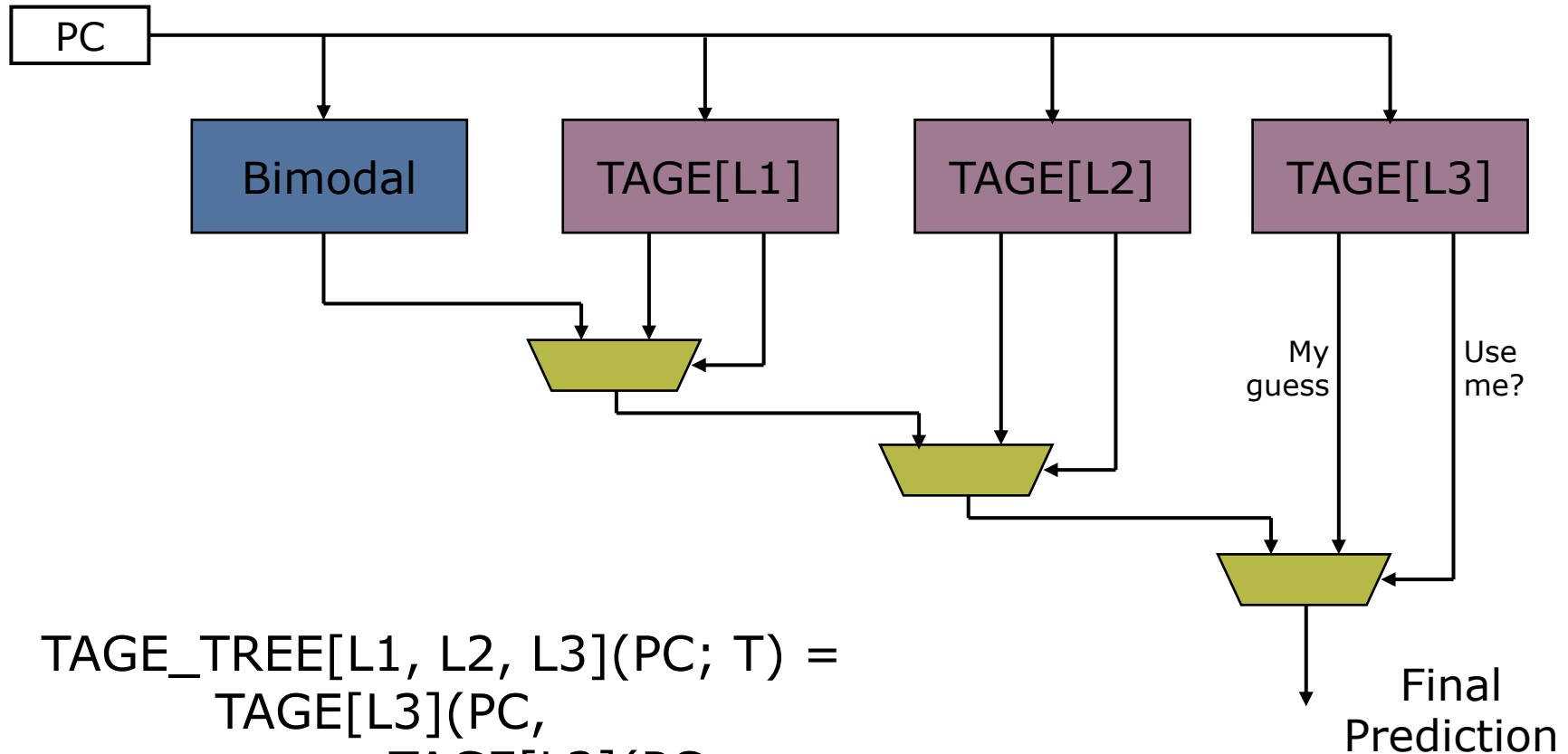
TAGE predictor

Seznec & Michaud, 2006



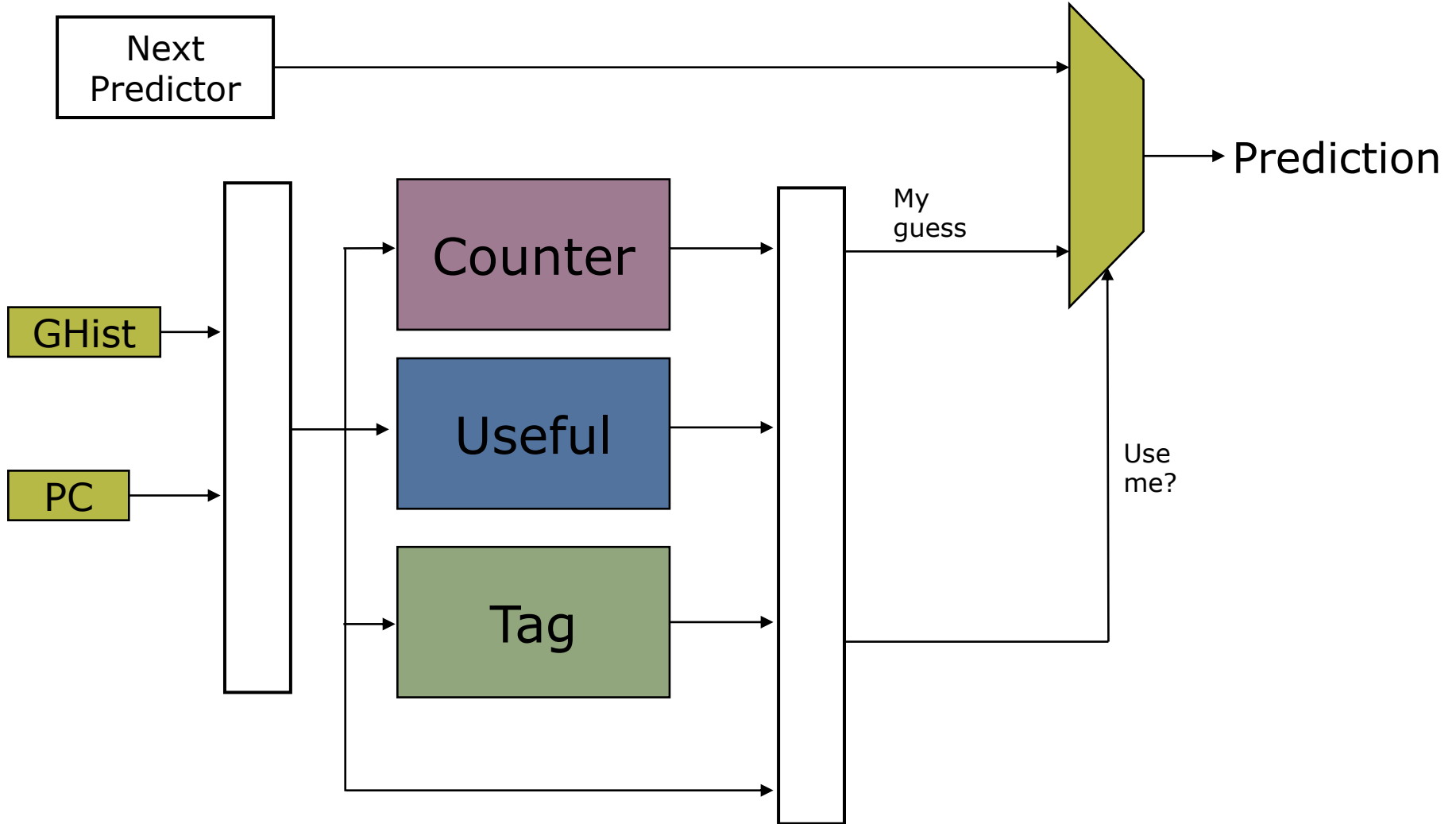
TAGE predictor

Seznec & Michaud, 2006



$$\text{TAGE_TREE}[L1, L2, L3](PC; T) = \text{TAGE}[L3](PC, \text{TAGE}[L2](PC, \text{TAGE}[L1](PC, \text{Bimodal}(PC; T); T); T); T)$$

TAGE component



TAGE predictor component

TAGE predictor component

TAGE[L](PC, NEXT; T) =

idx = hash(PC, GHIST[L](;T))
tag = hash'(PC, GHIST[L](;T))

TAGE.U = SA(idx, tag; ((TAGE == T) && (NEXT != T))?1:SA)
TAGE.Counter = SA(idx, tag; T?SA+1:SA-1)

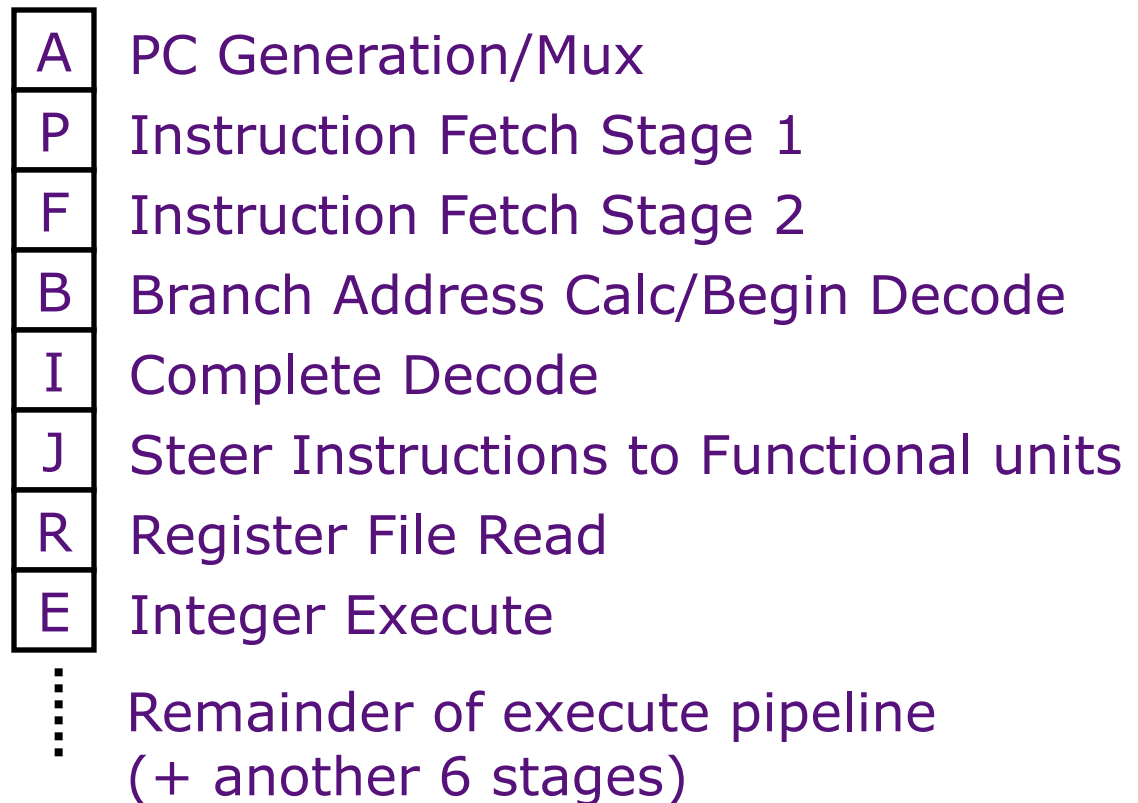
use_me = TAGE.U && isStrong(TAGE.Counter)
TAGE = use_me?MSB(TAGE.Counter):NEXT

Notes:

- SA is a set-associative structure
- SA allocation occurs on mispredict (not shown)
- TAGE.U cleared on global counter saturation

Limitations of branch predictors

Only predicts branch direction. Therefore, cannot redirect fetch stream until after branch target is determined.

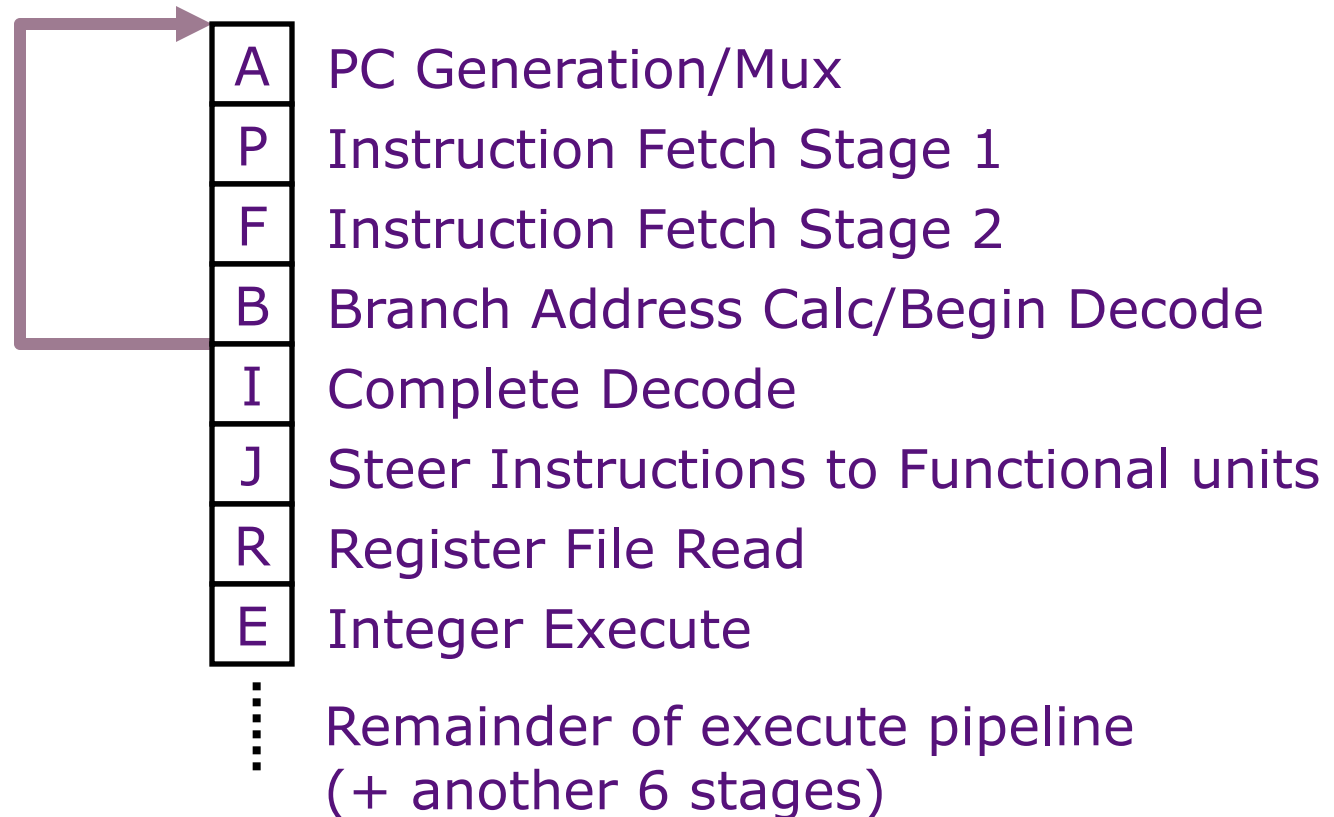


UltraSPARC-III fetch pipeline

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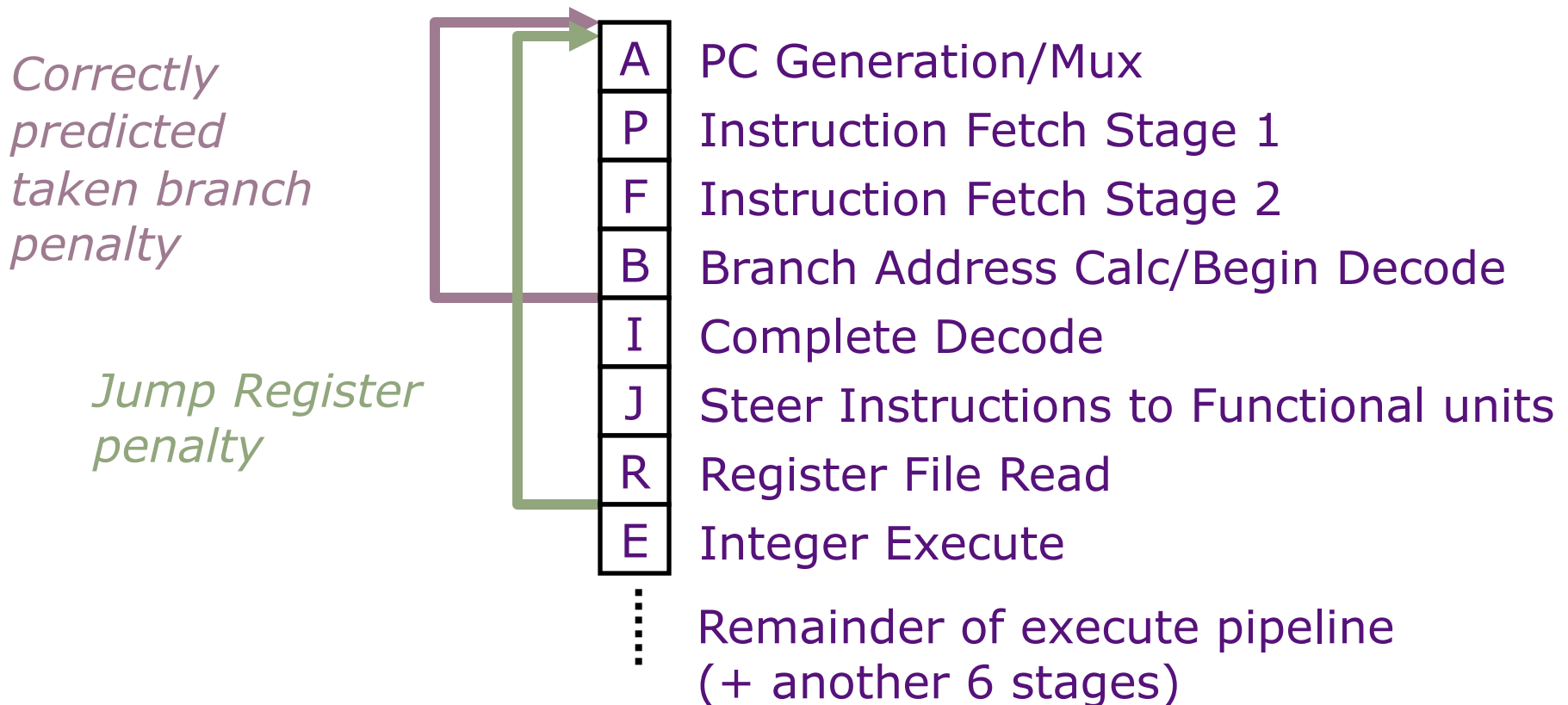
*Correctly
predicted
taken branch
penalty*



UltraSPARC-III fetch pipeline

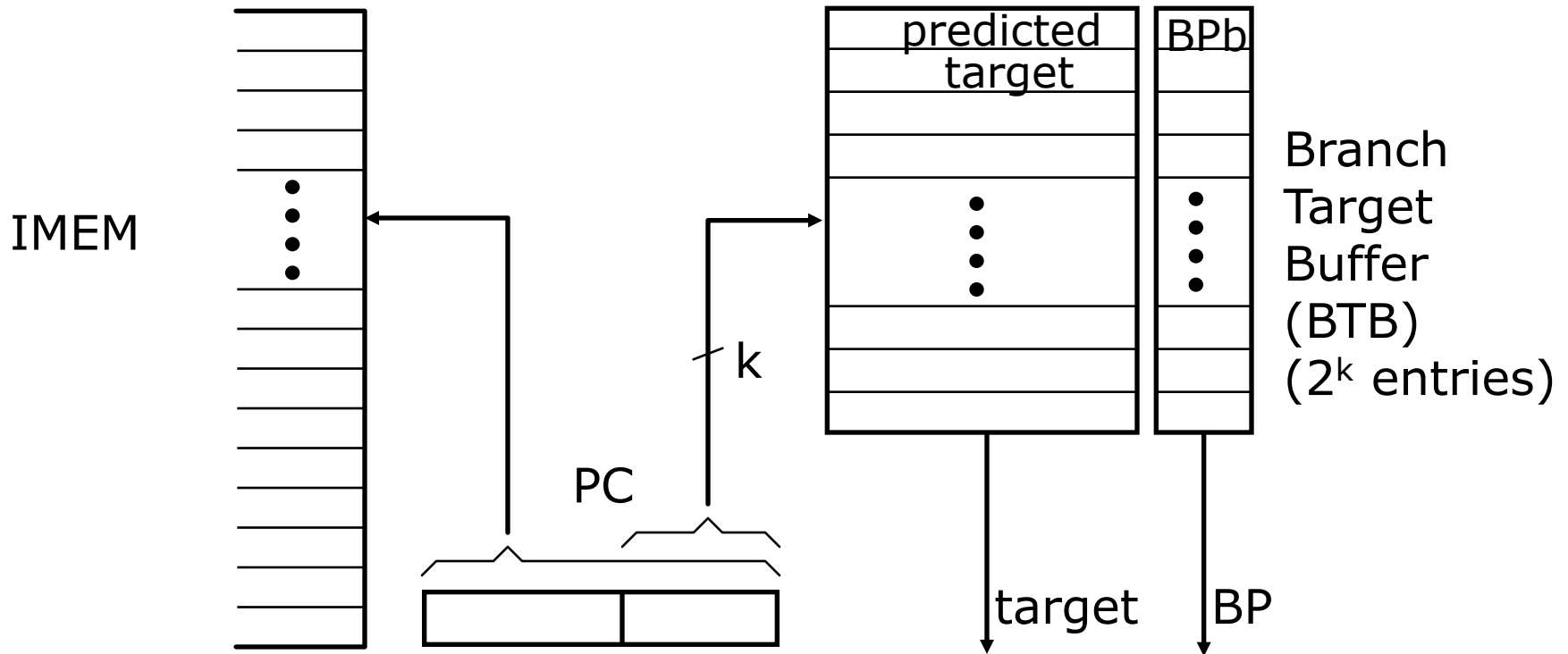
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UltraSPARC-III fetch pipeline

Branch Target Buffer (untagged)

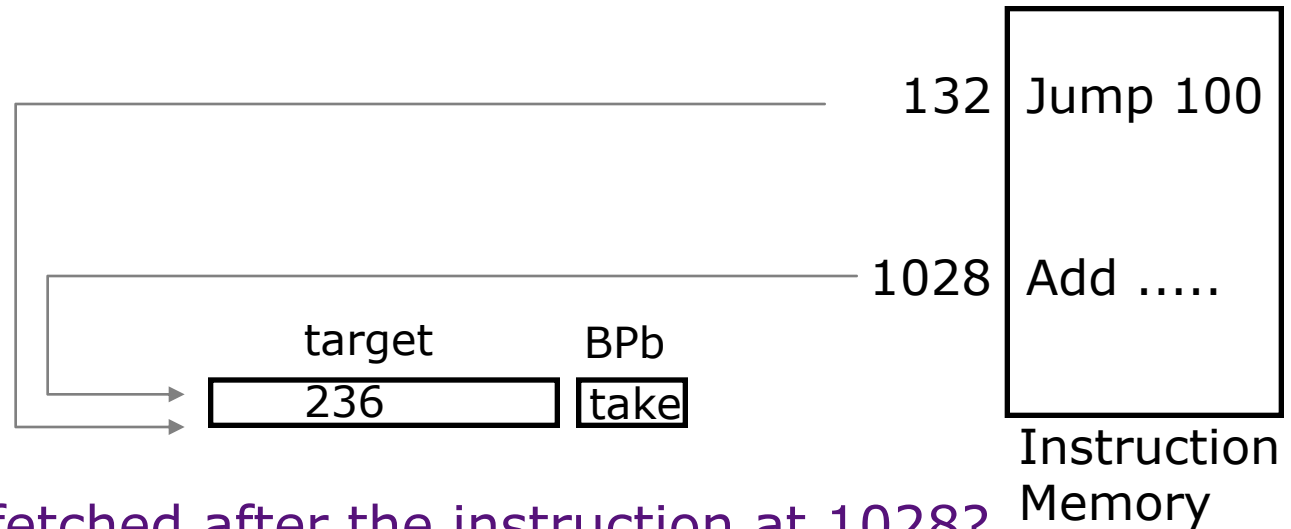


BP bits are stored with the predicted target address.

IF stage: *If (BP=taken) then nPC=target else nPC=PC+4*
later: *check prediction, if wrong then kill the instruction*
and update BTB & BPb, else update BPb

Address Collisions

Assume a
128-entry
BTB



What will be fetched after the instruction at 1028?

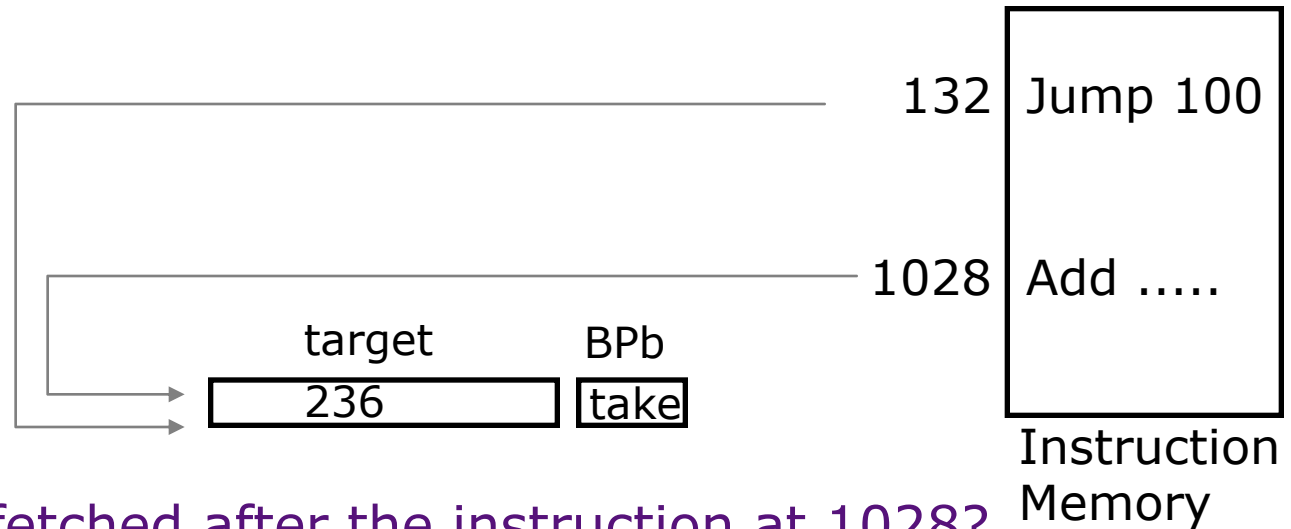
BTB prediction =

Correct target =

⇒

Address Collisions

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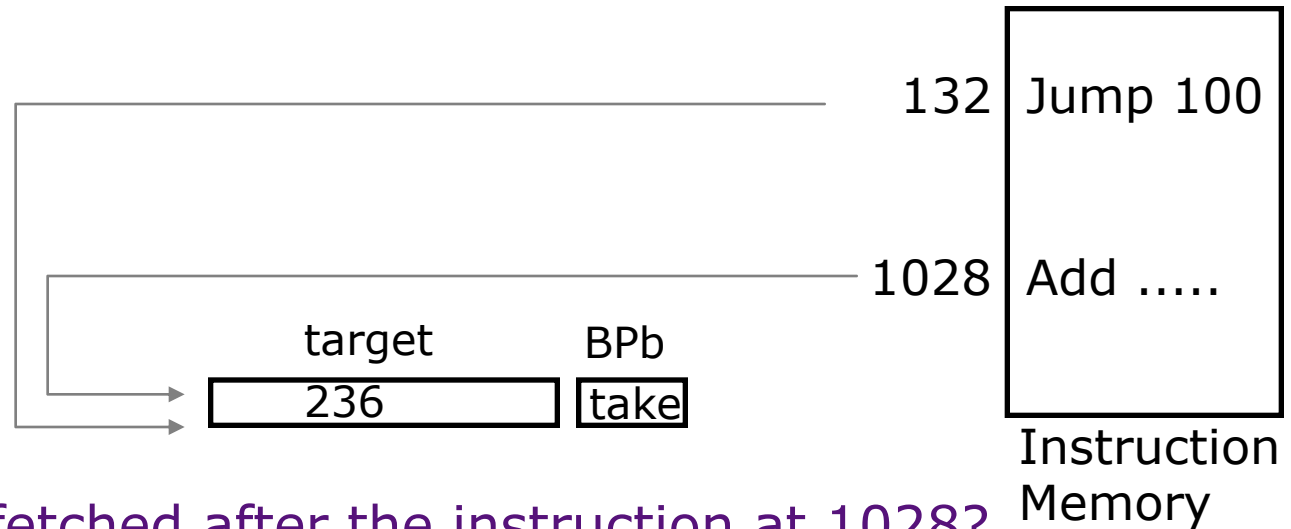
What will be fetched after the instruction at 1028?

BTB prediction = 236
Correct target =

⇒

Address Collisions

Assume a
128-entry
BTB



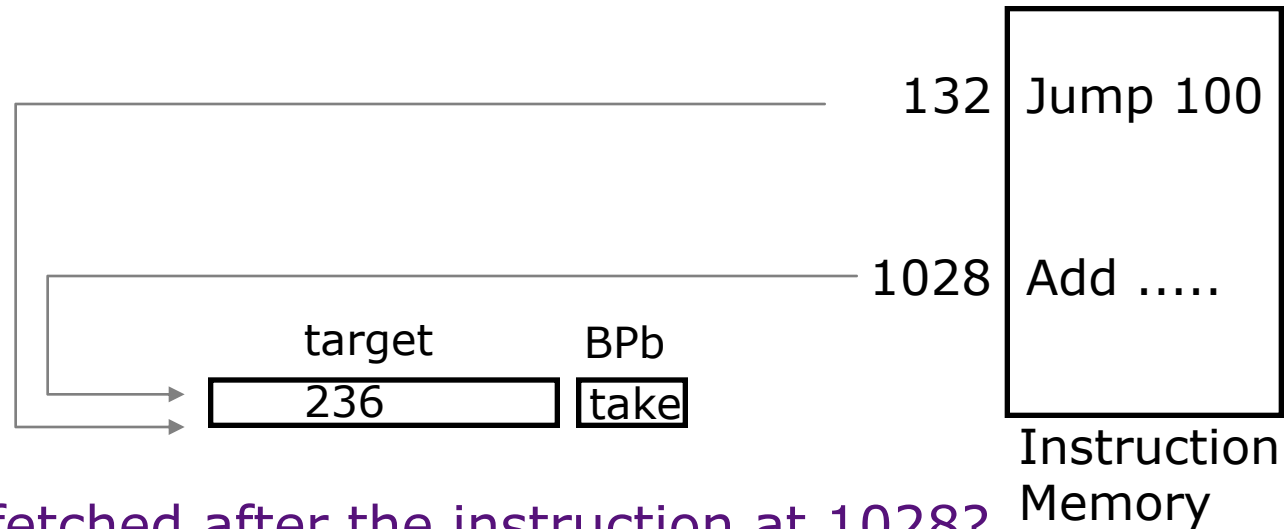
What will be fetched after the instruction at 1028?

BTB prediction = 236
Correct target = 1032

⇒

Address Collisions

Assume a
128-entry
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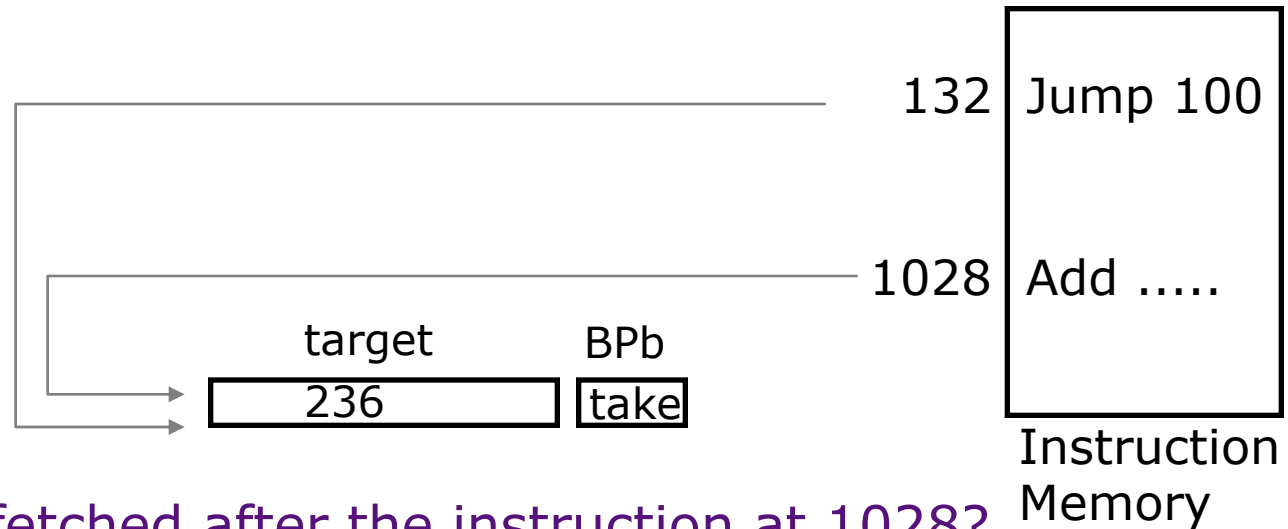
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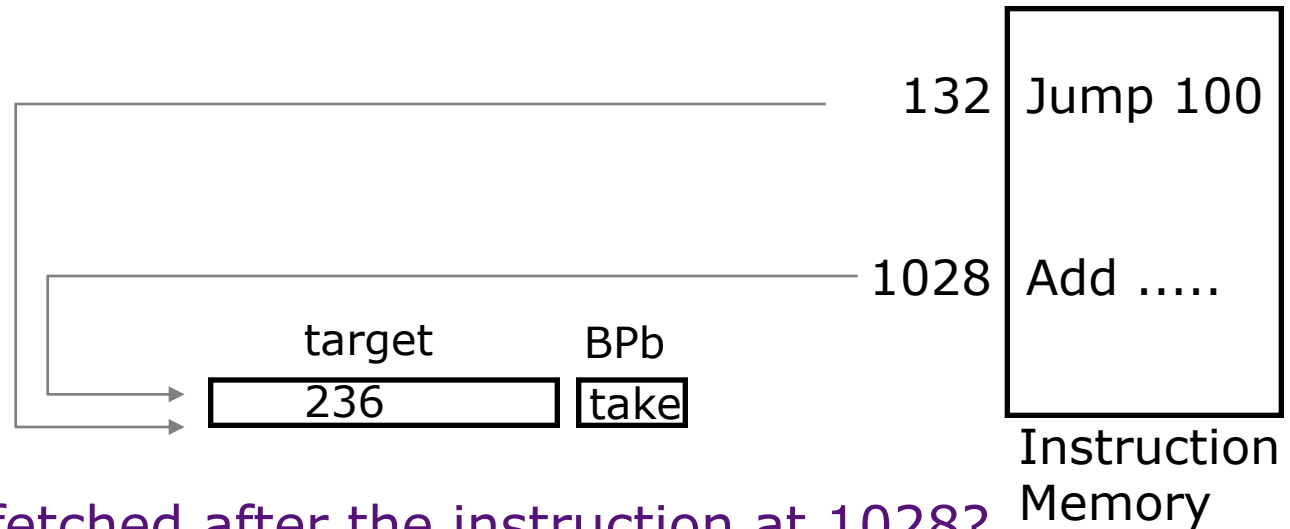
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Is this a common occurrence?

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What will be fetched after the instruction at 1028?

BTB prediction = 236

Correct target = 1032

⇒ *kill* PC=236 and *fetch* PC=1032

Is this a common occurrence?

Can we avoid these mispredictions?

BTB is only for Control Instructions

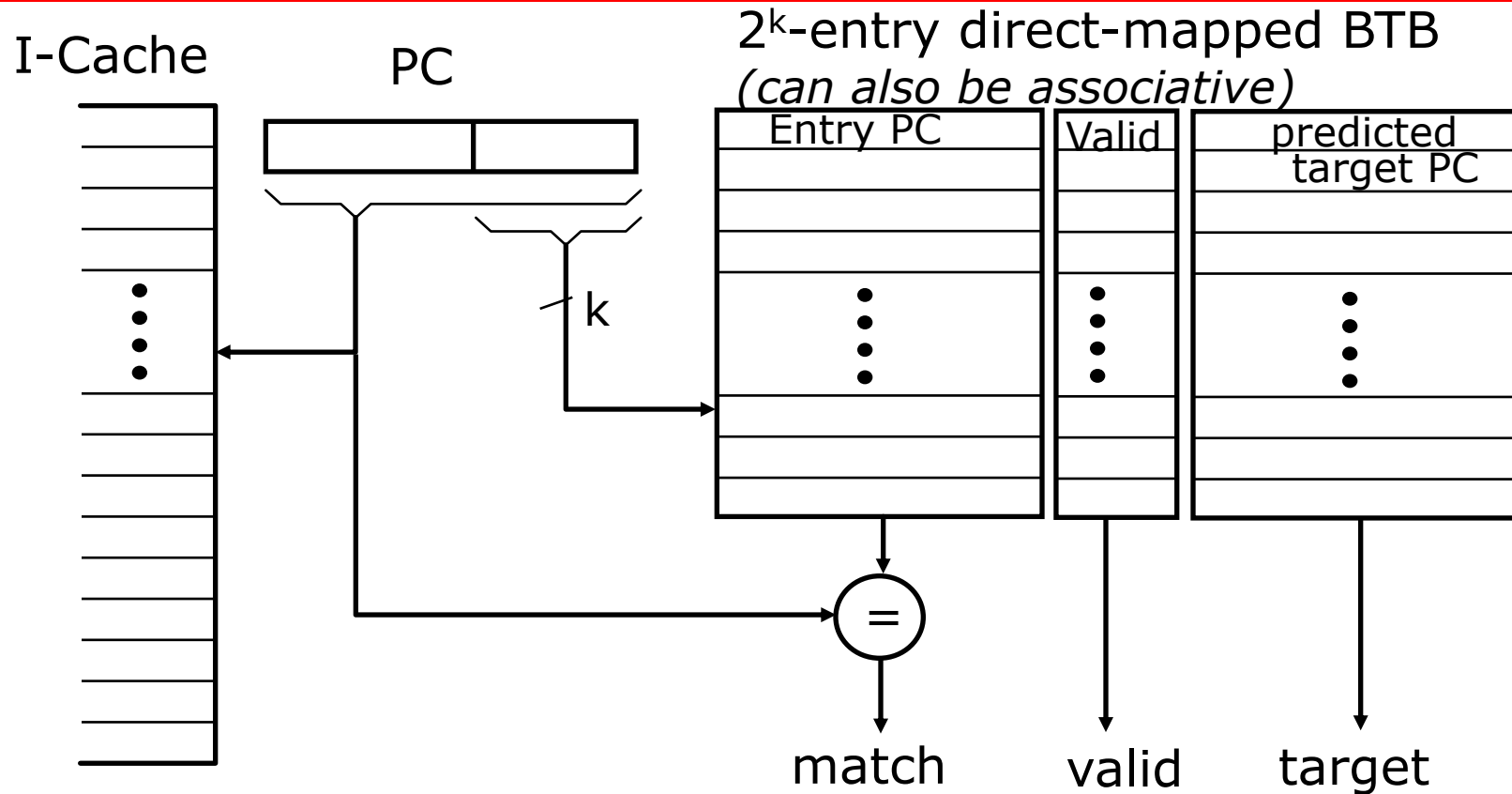
BTB contains useful information for branch and jump instructions only

⇒ Do not update it for other instructions

For all other instructions the next PC is $(PC)+4$!

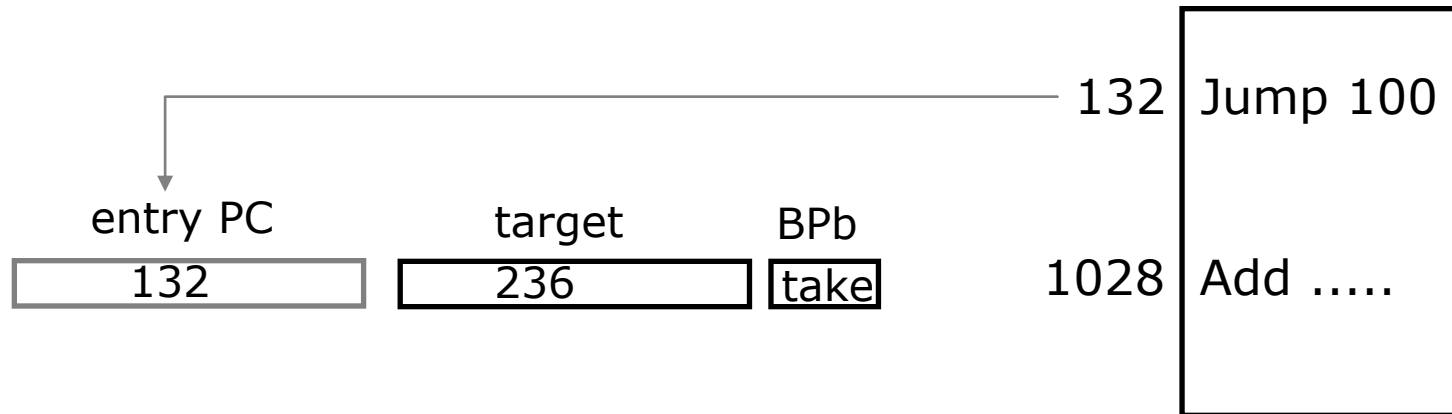
How to achieve this effect without decoding the instruction?

Branch Target Buffer (tagged)



- Keep both the branch PC and target PC in the BTB
- PC+4 is fetched if match fails
- Only *taken* branches and jumps held in BTB
- Next PC determined *before* branch fetched and decoded

Consulting BTB Before Decoding



- The match for PC=1028 fails and 1028+4 is fetched
⇒ *eliminates false predictions after ALU instructions*
- BTB contains entries only for control transfer instructions
⇒ *more room to store branch targets*

Combining BTB and BHT

- BTB entries are considerably more expensive than BHT, but can redirect fetches at earlier stage in pipeline and can accelerate indirect branches (JR)
- BHT can hold many more entries and is more accurate

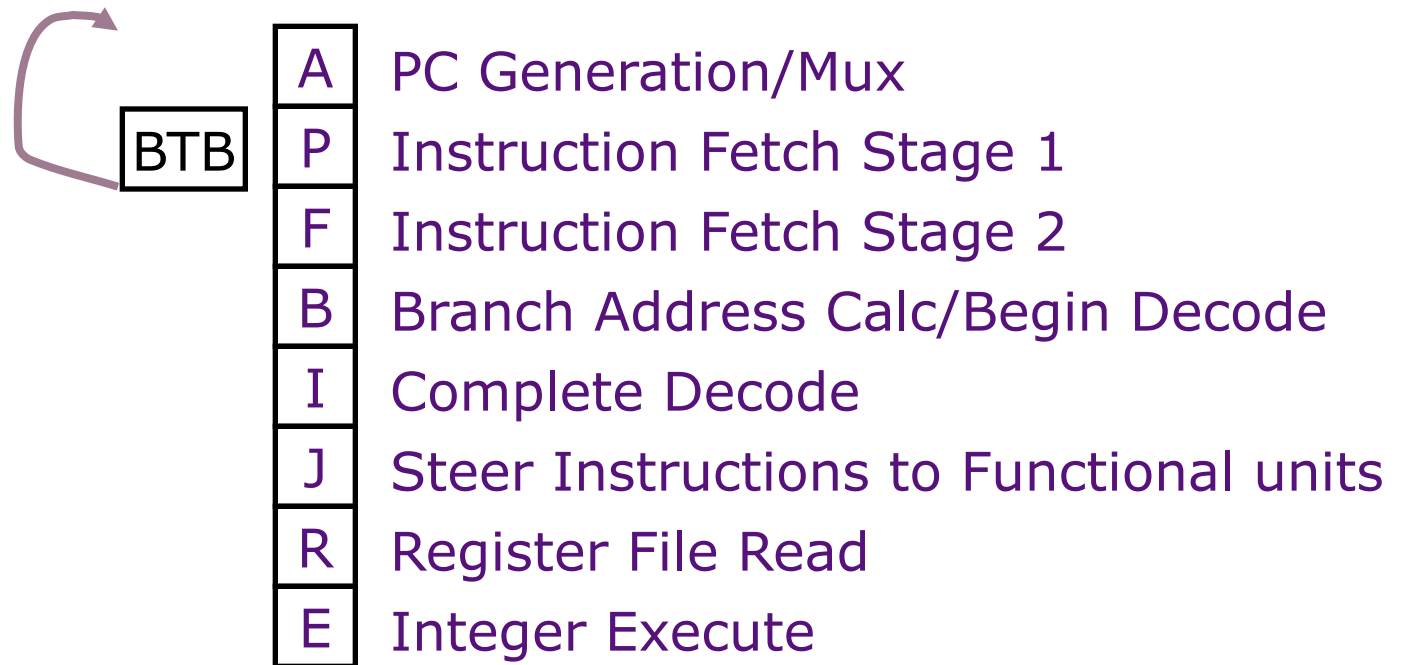
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A	PC Generation/Mux
P	Instruction Fetch Stage 1
F	Instruction Fetch Stage 2
B	Branch Address Calc/Begin Decode
I	Complete Decode
J	Steer Instructions to Functional units
R	Register File Read
E	Integer Execute

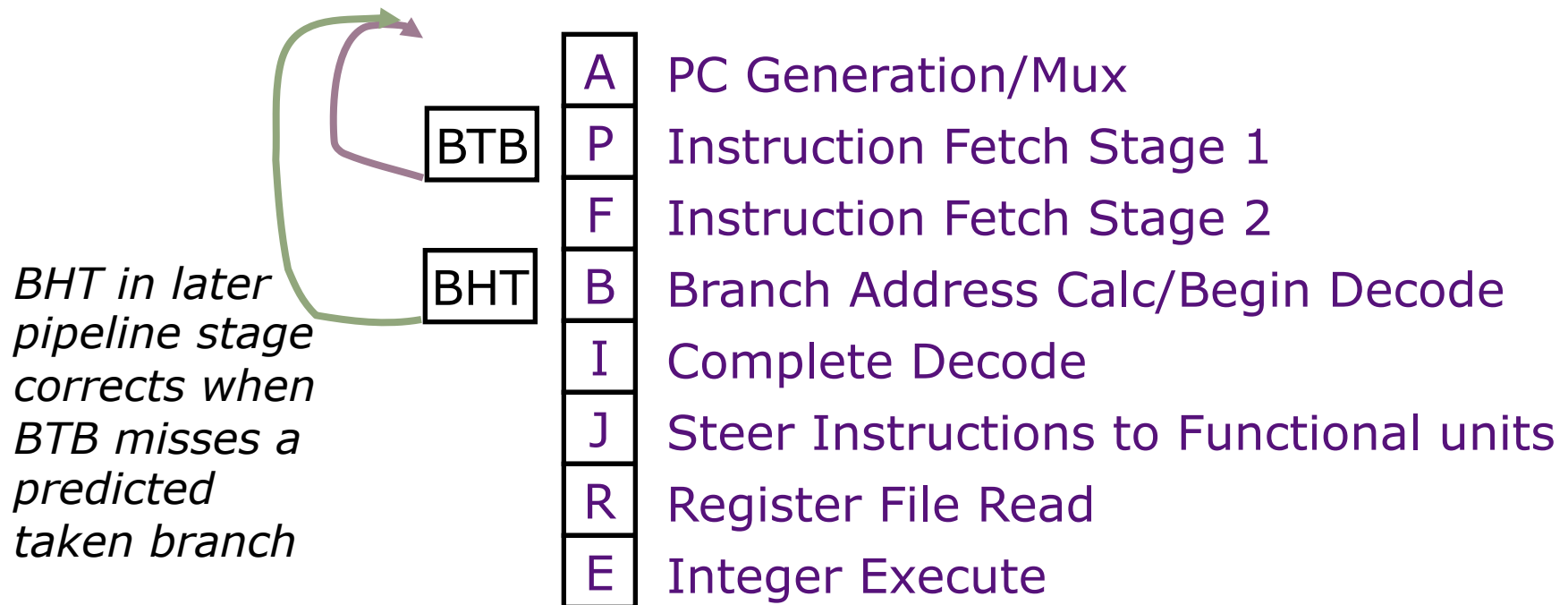
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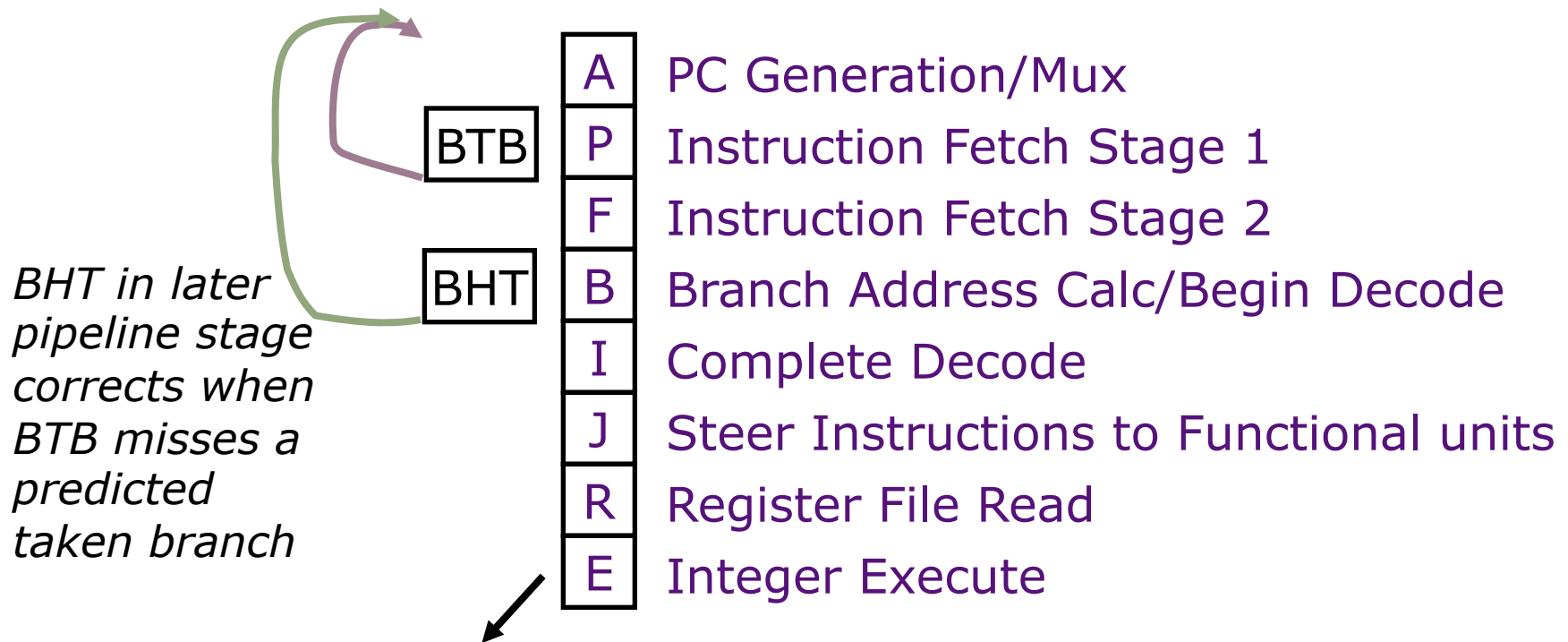
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BTB/BHT only updated after branch resolves in E stage

Uses of Jump Register (JR)

- Switch statements (jump to address of matching case)
- Dynamic function call (jump to run-time function address)
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BTB works well if usually return to the same place

⇒ *Often one function called from many distinct call sites!*

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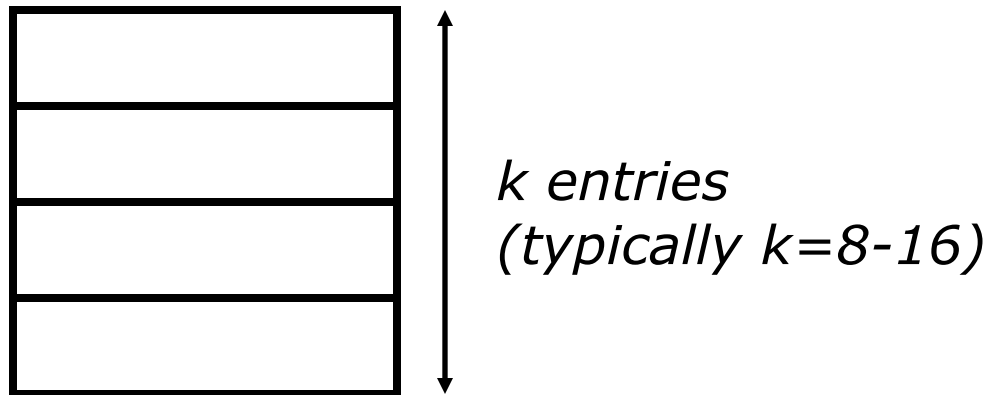
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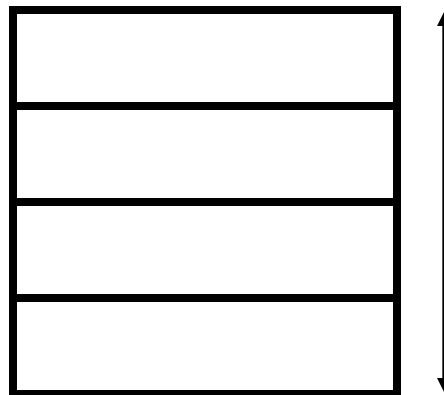
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*Push call address when
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*k entries
(typically k=8-16)*

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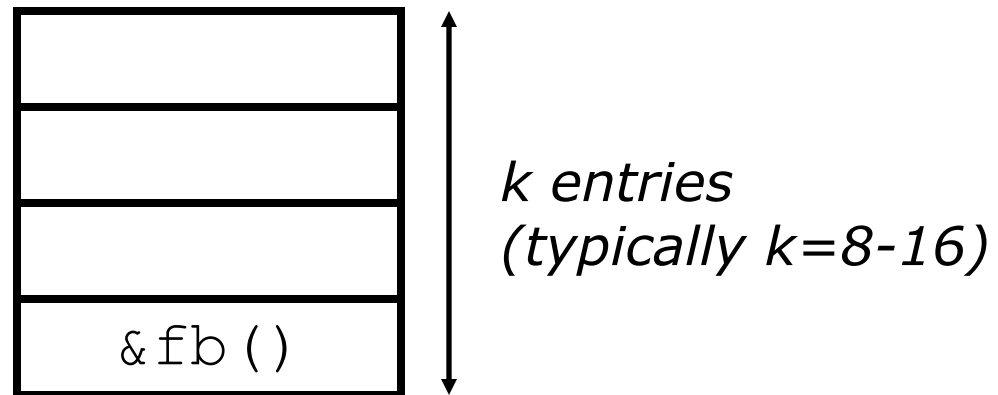
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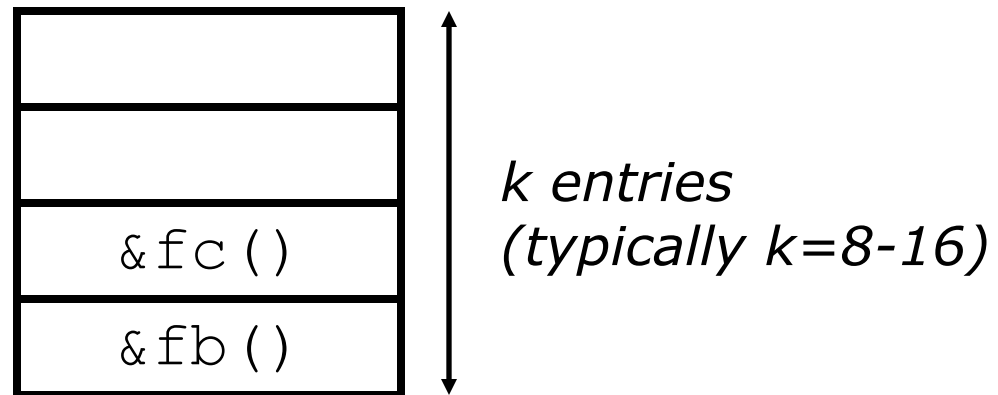
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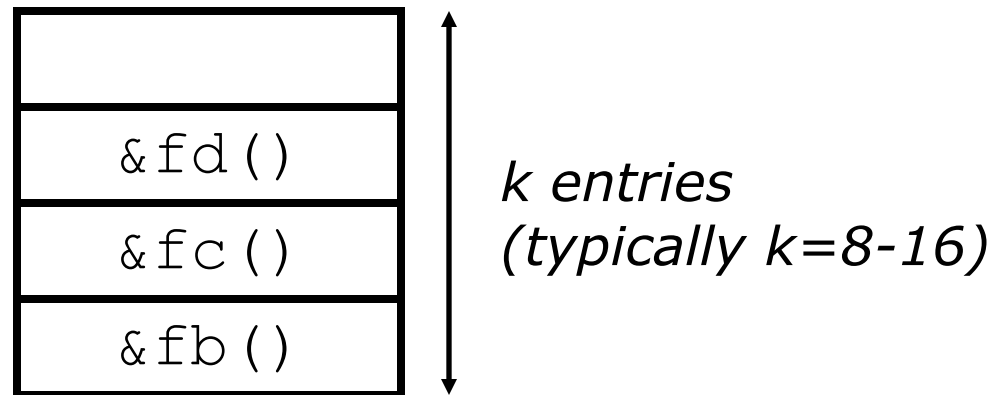
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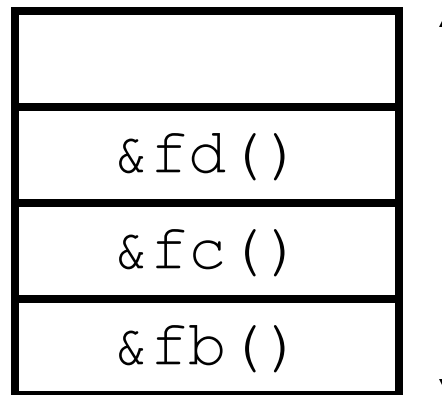
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Push call address when function call executed

Pop return address when subroutine return decoded

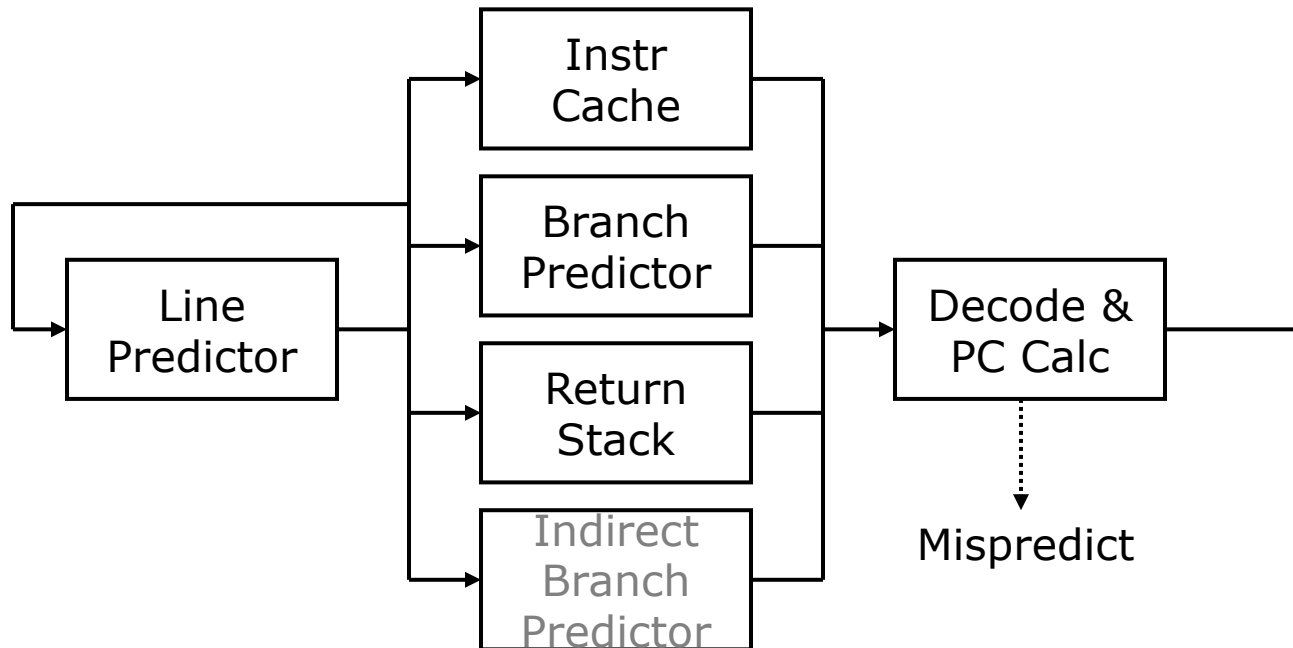


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Line Prediction

(Alpha 21[234]64)

- For superscalar, useful to predict next cache line(s) to fetch

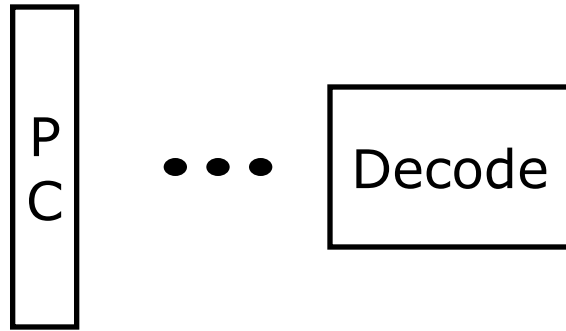


- Line Predictor predicts line to fetch each cycle (tight loop)
 - Untagged BTB structure – Why?
 - 21464 was to predict 2 lines per cycle
- Icache fetches block, and predictors improve target prediction
- PC Calc checks accuracy of line prediction(s)

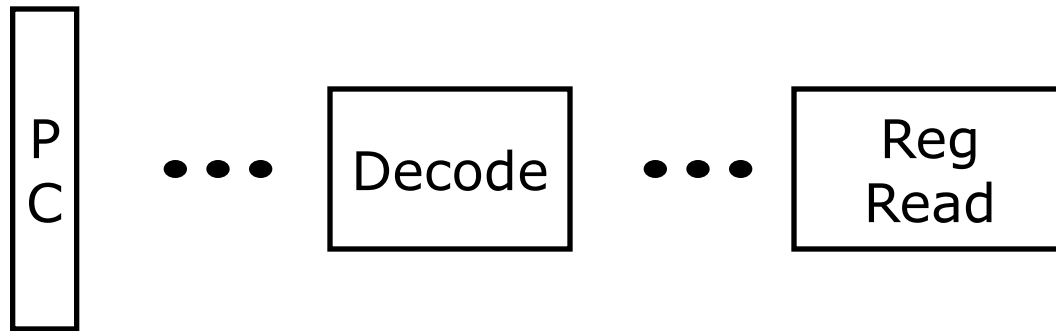
Overview of Branch Prediction

P
C

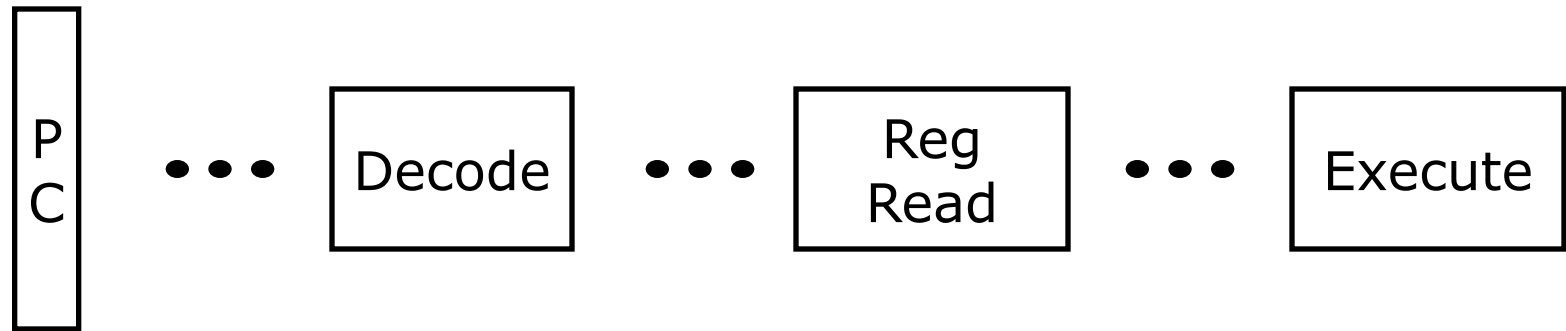
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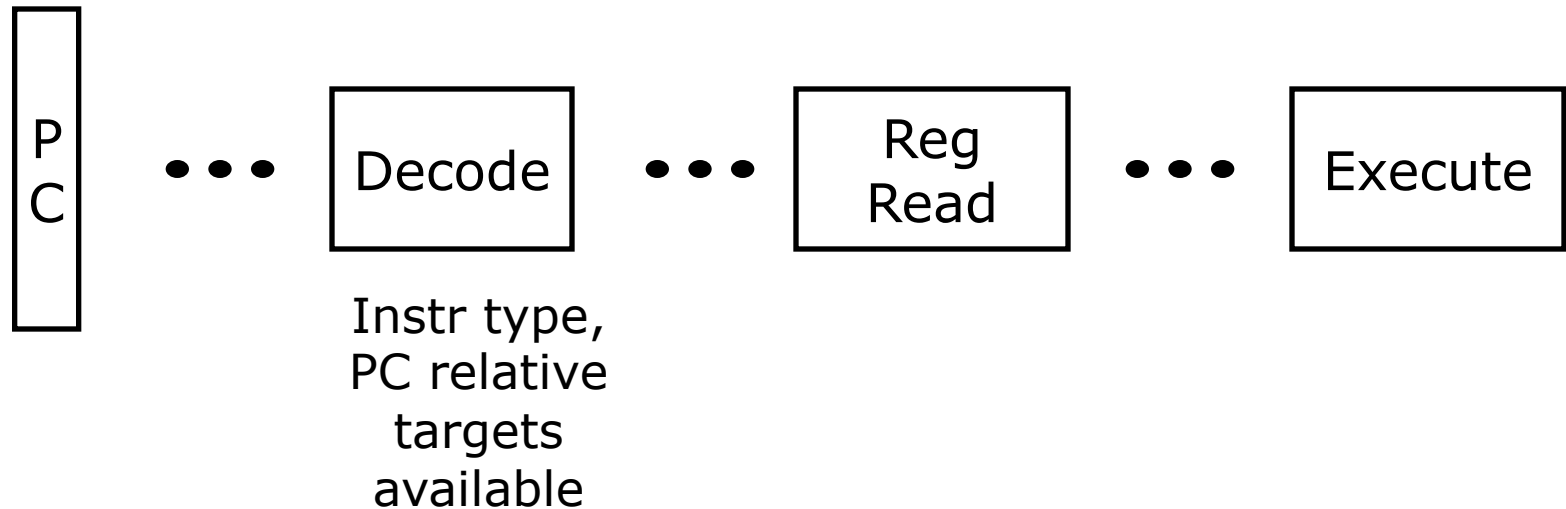
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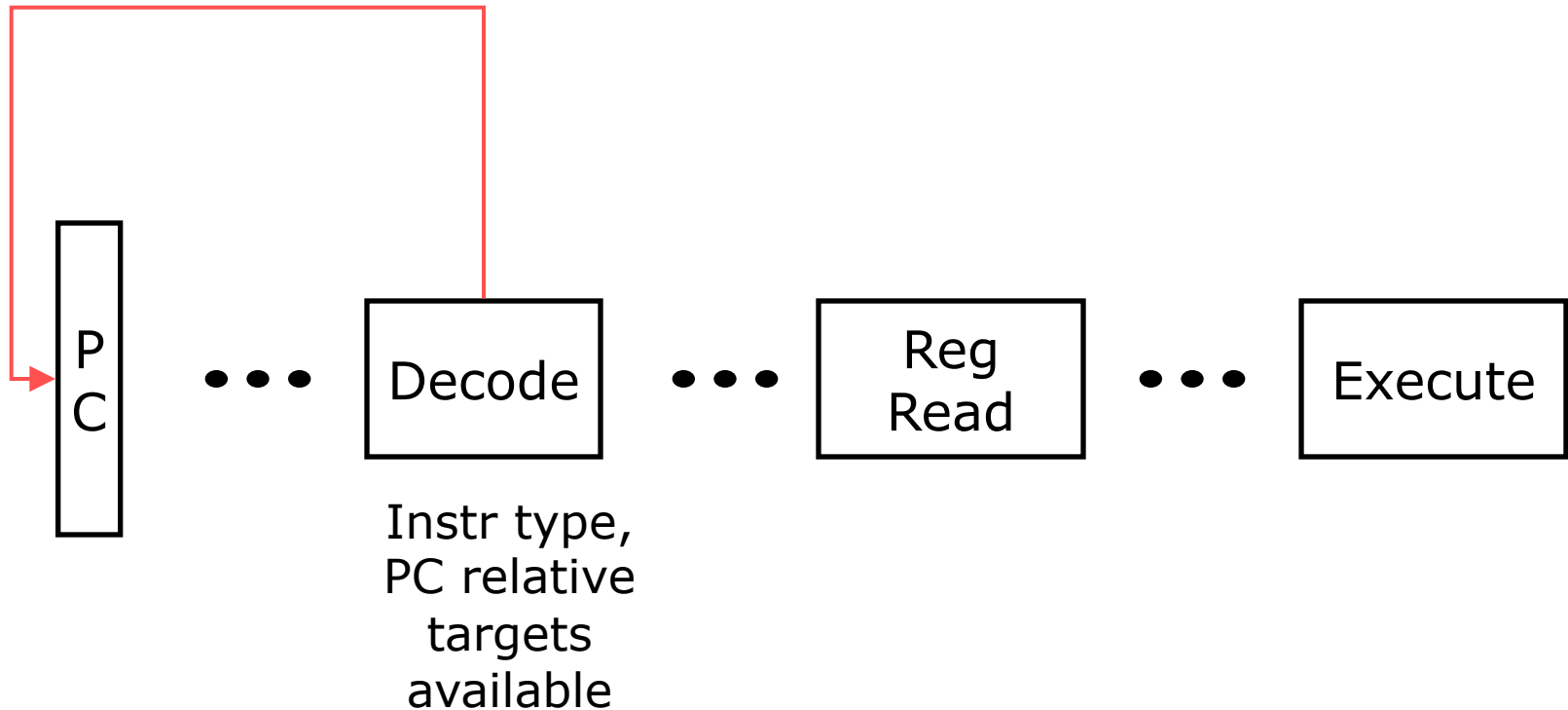
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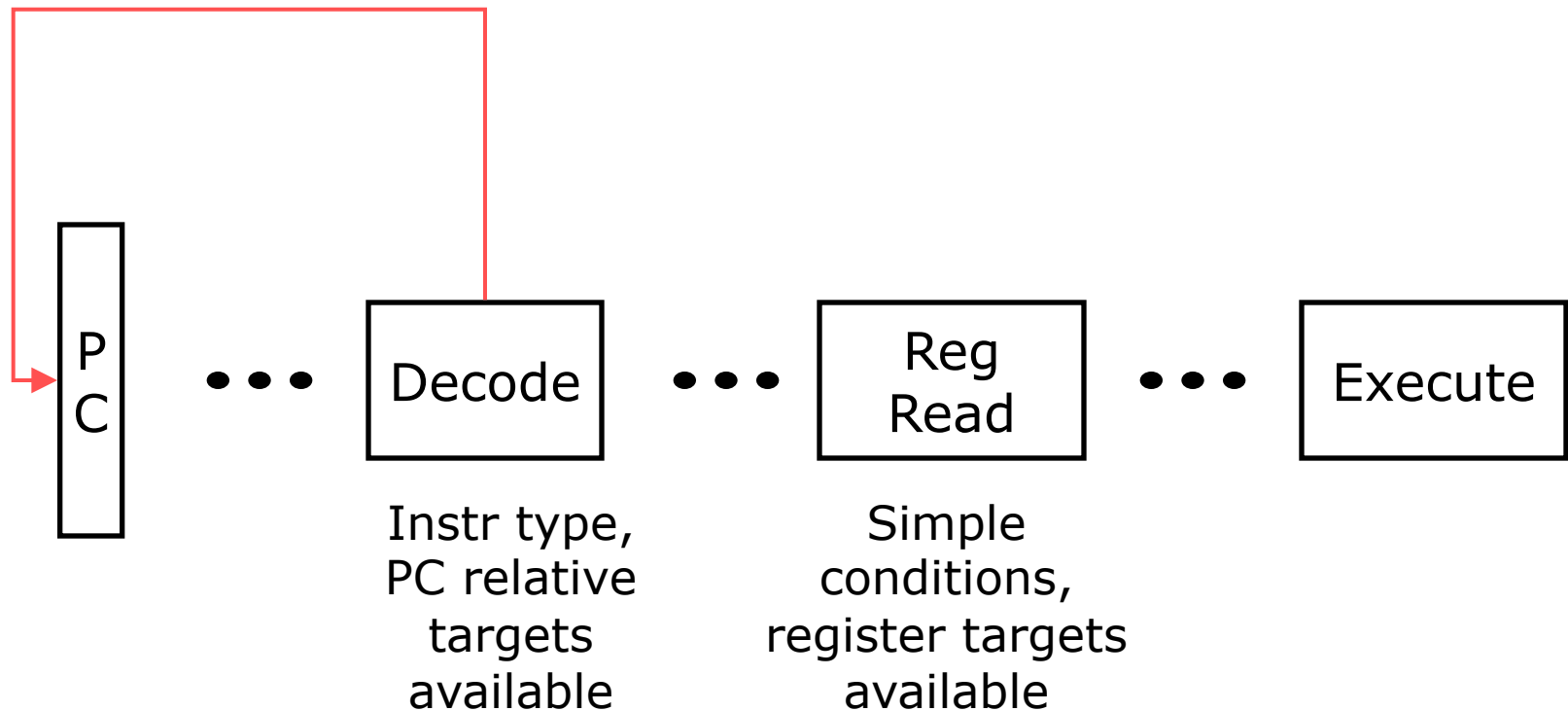
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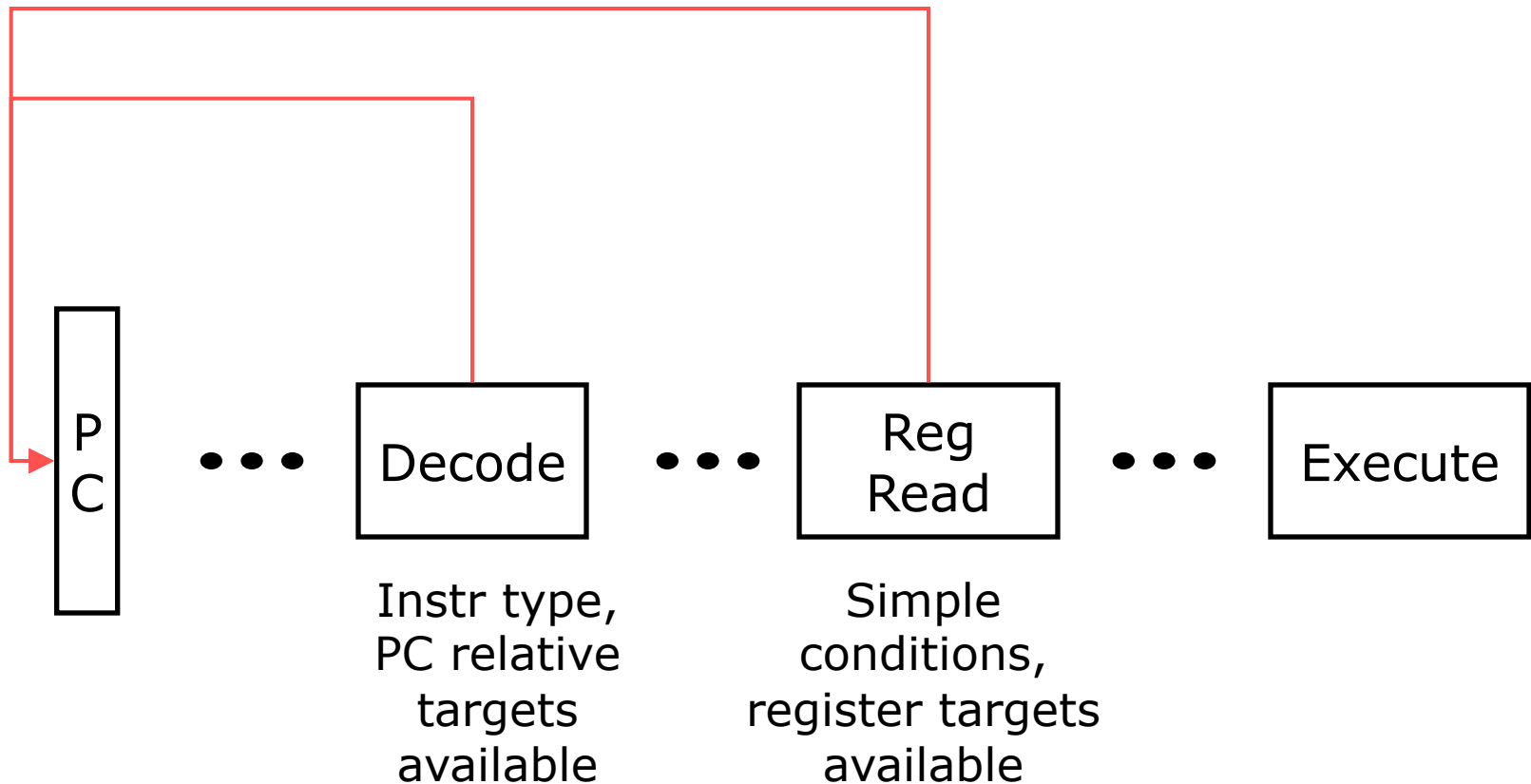
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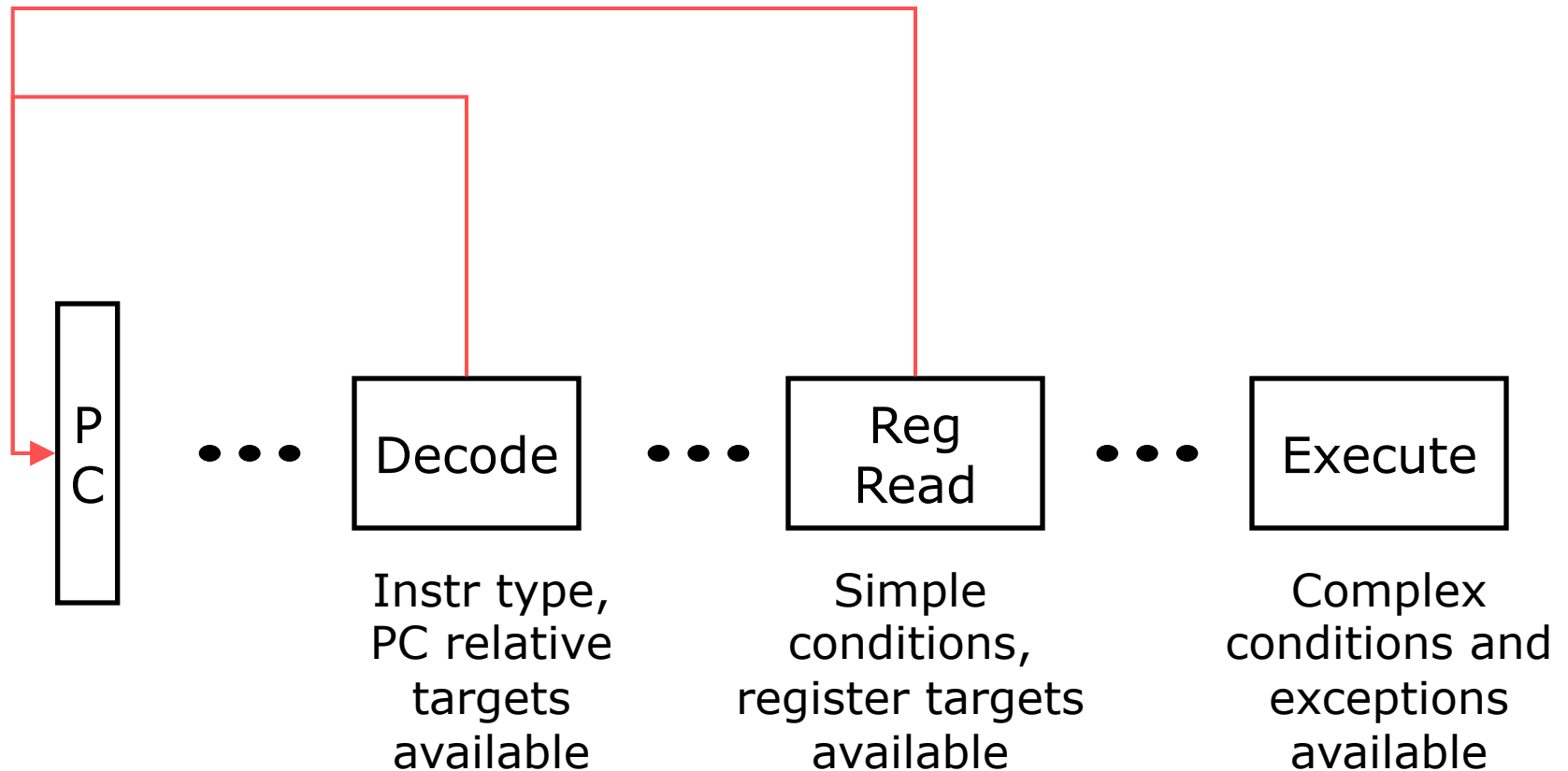
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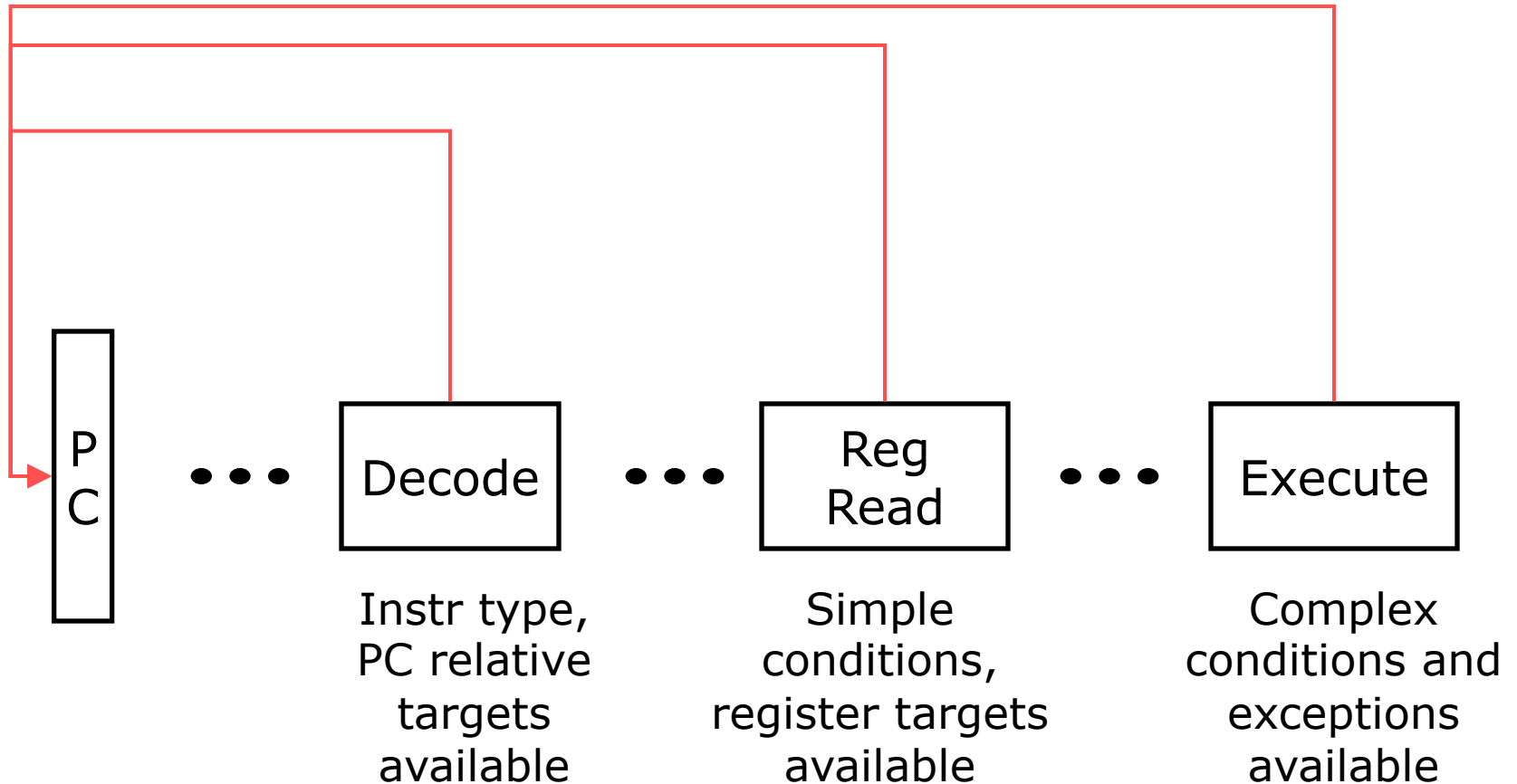
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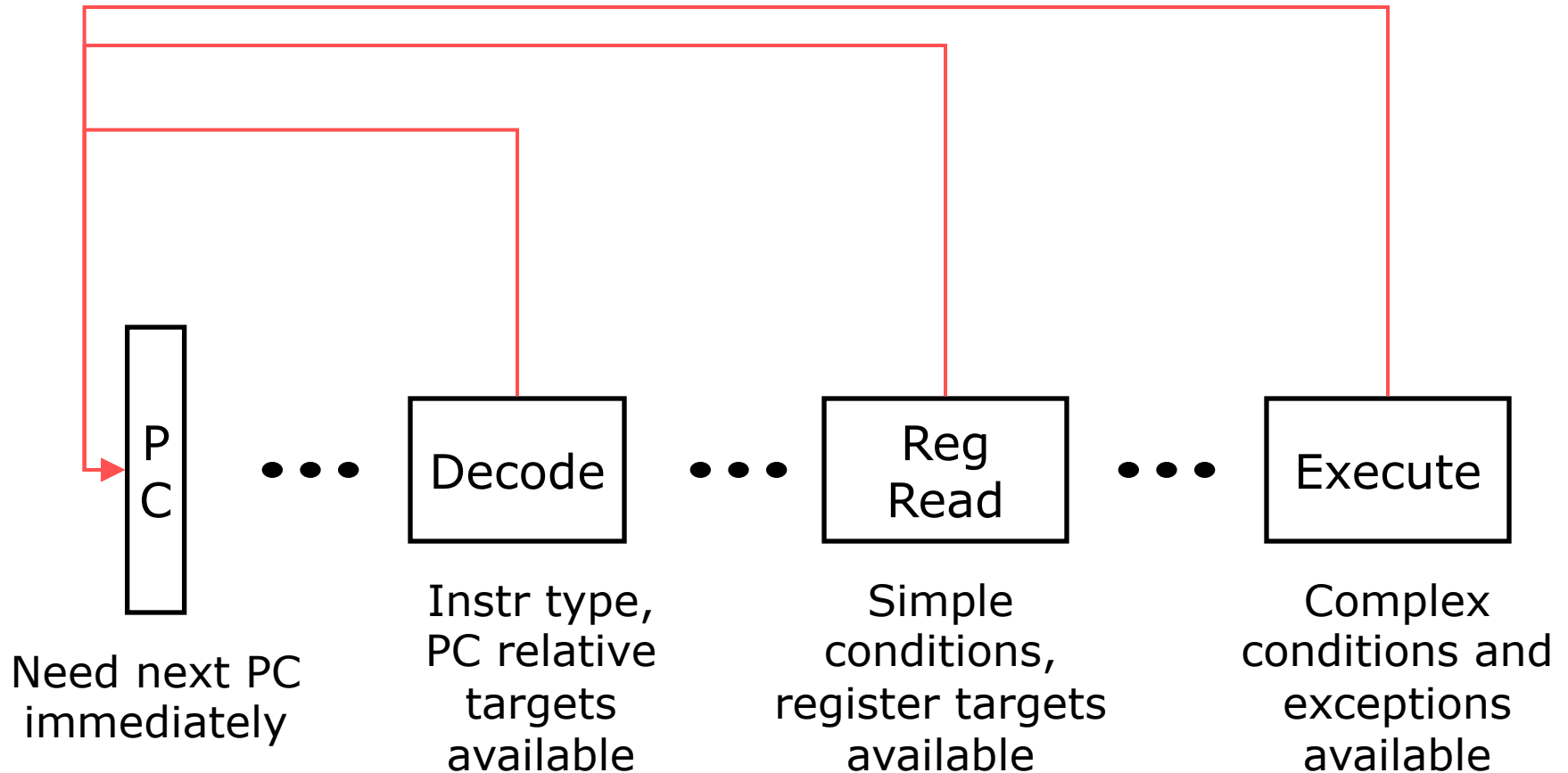
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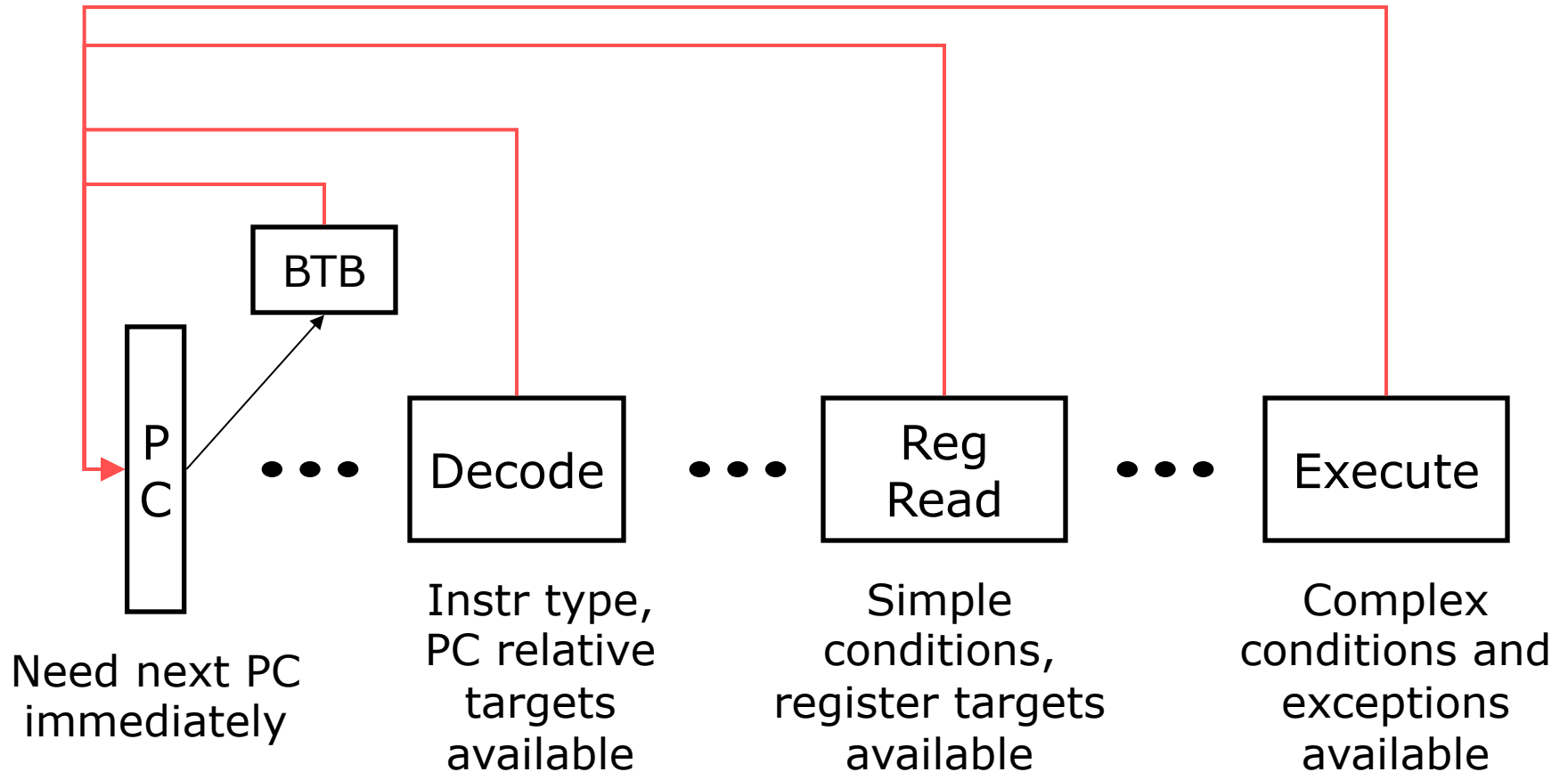
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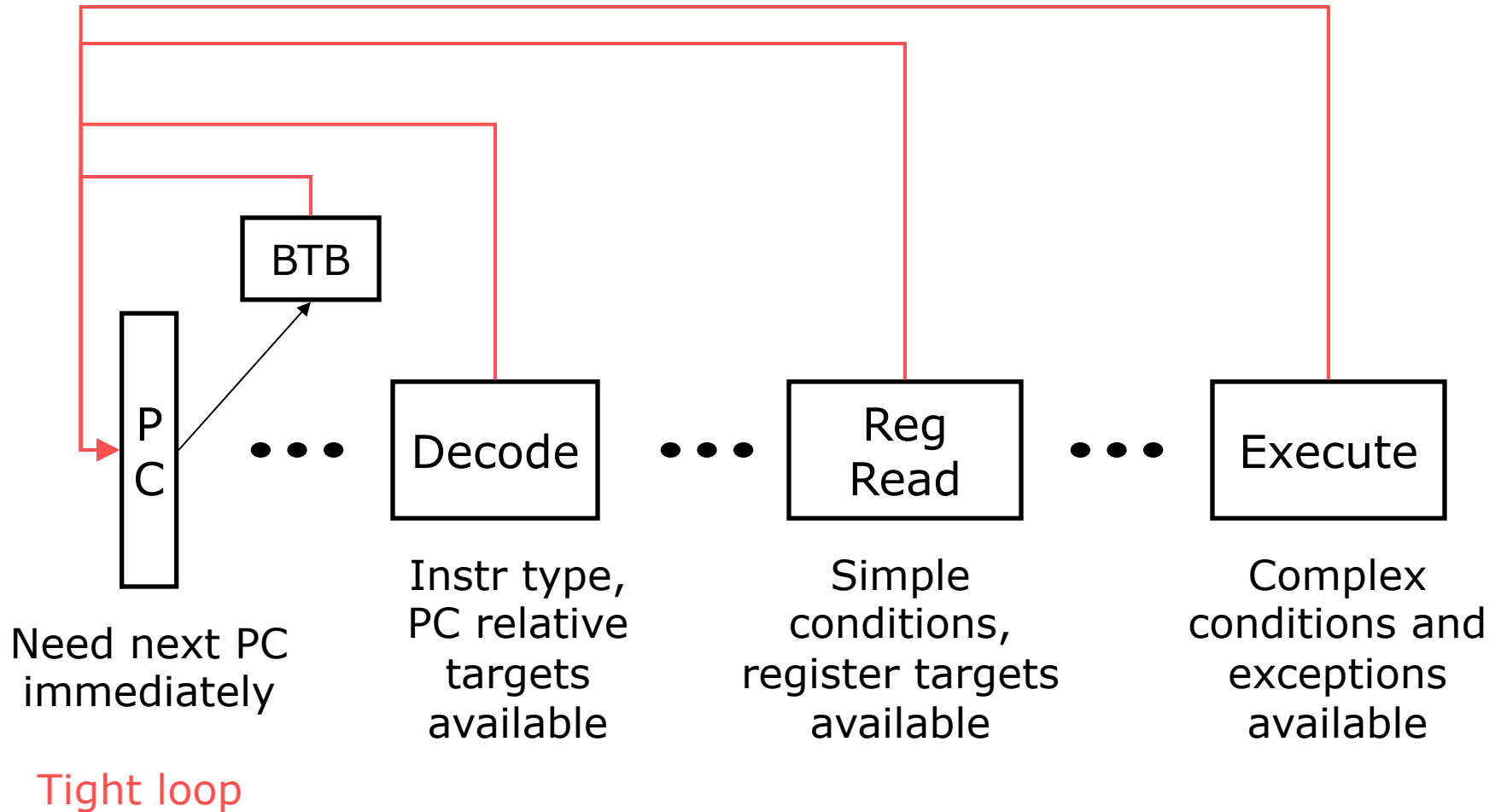
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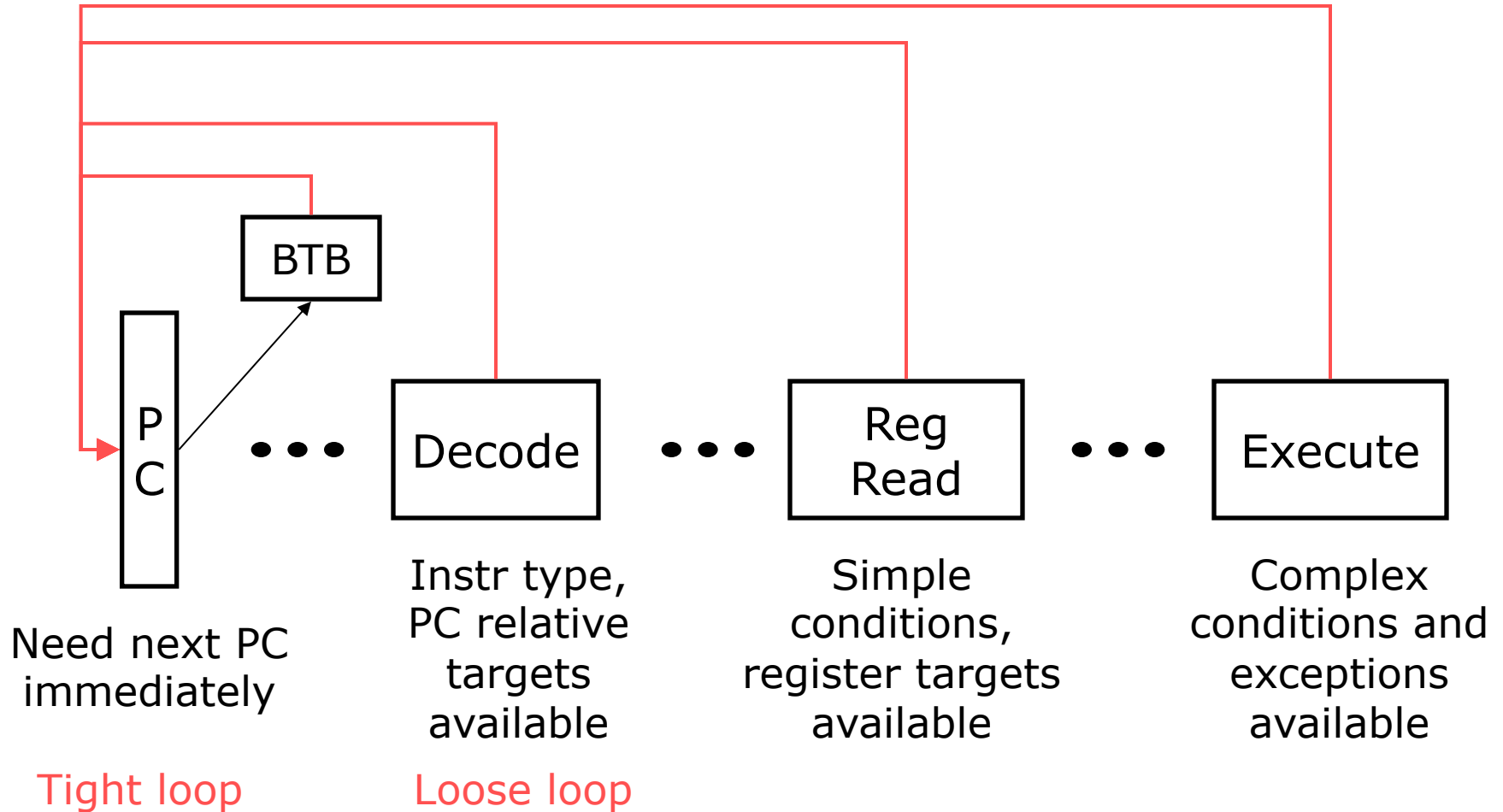
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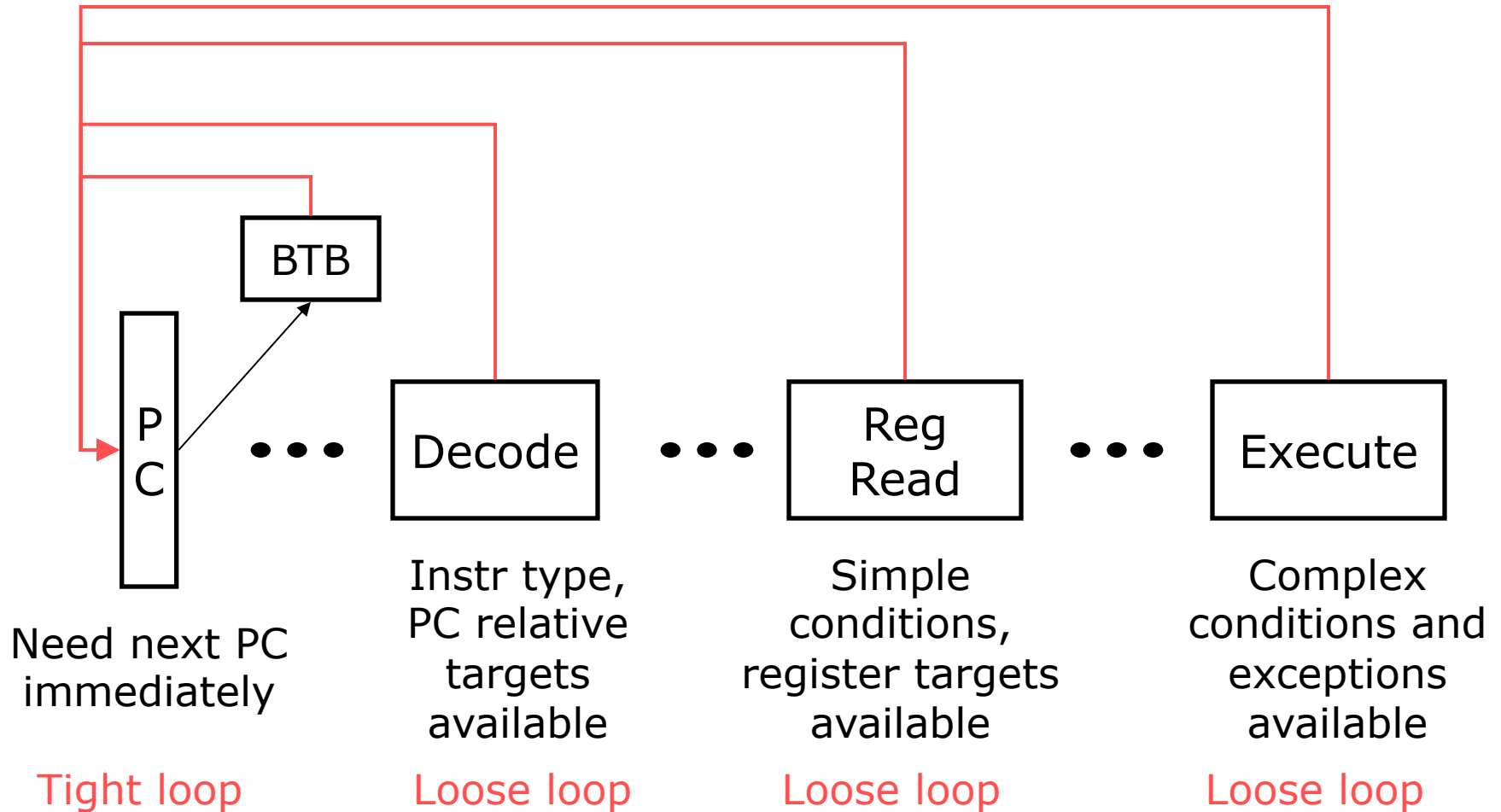
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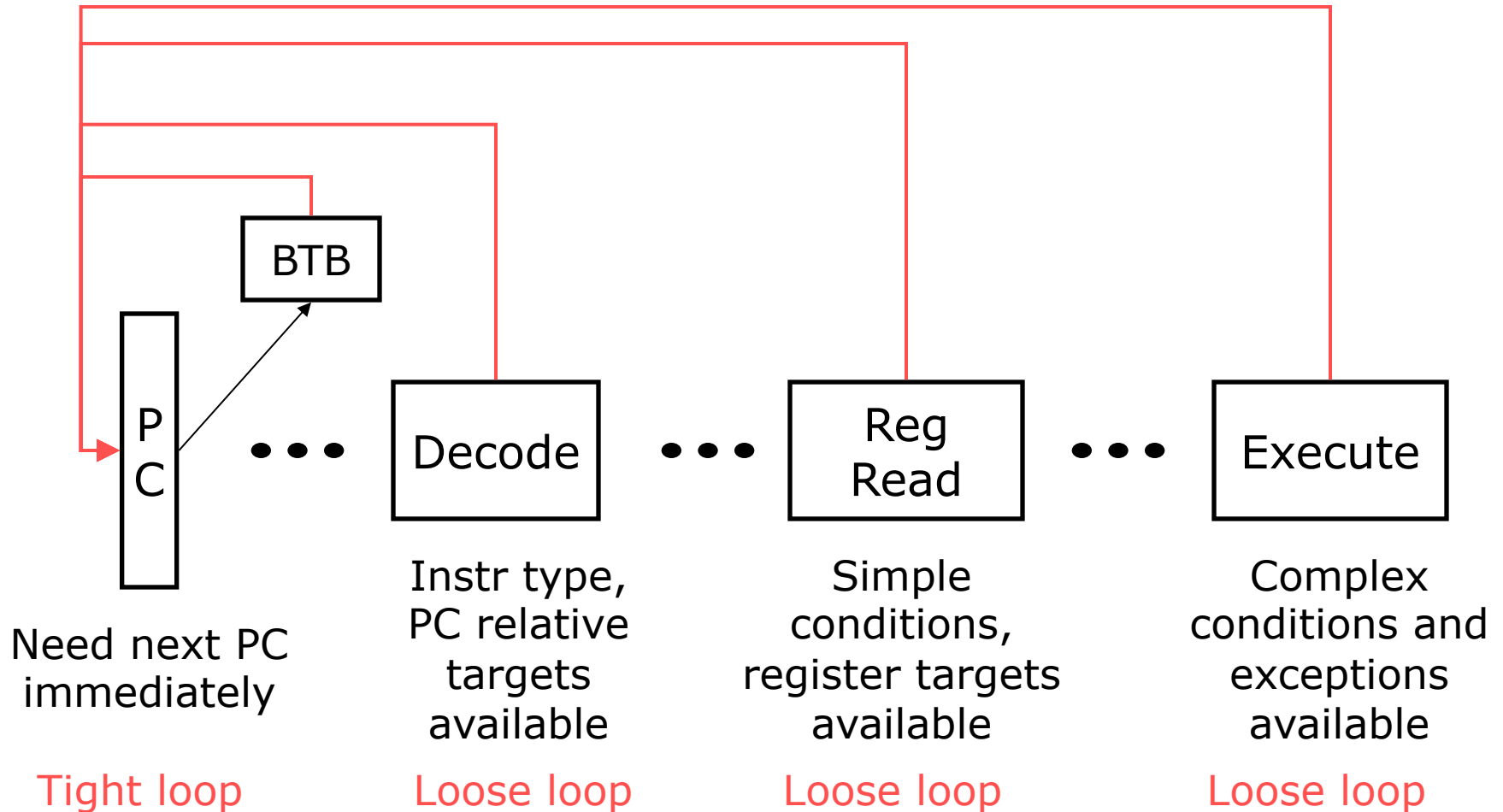
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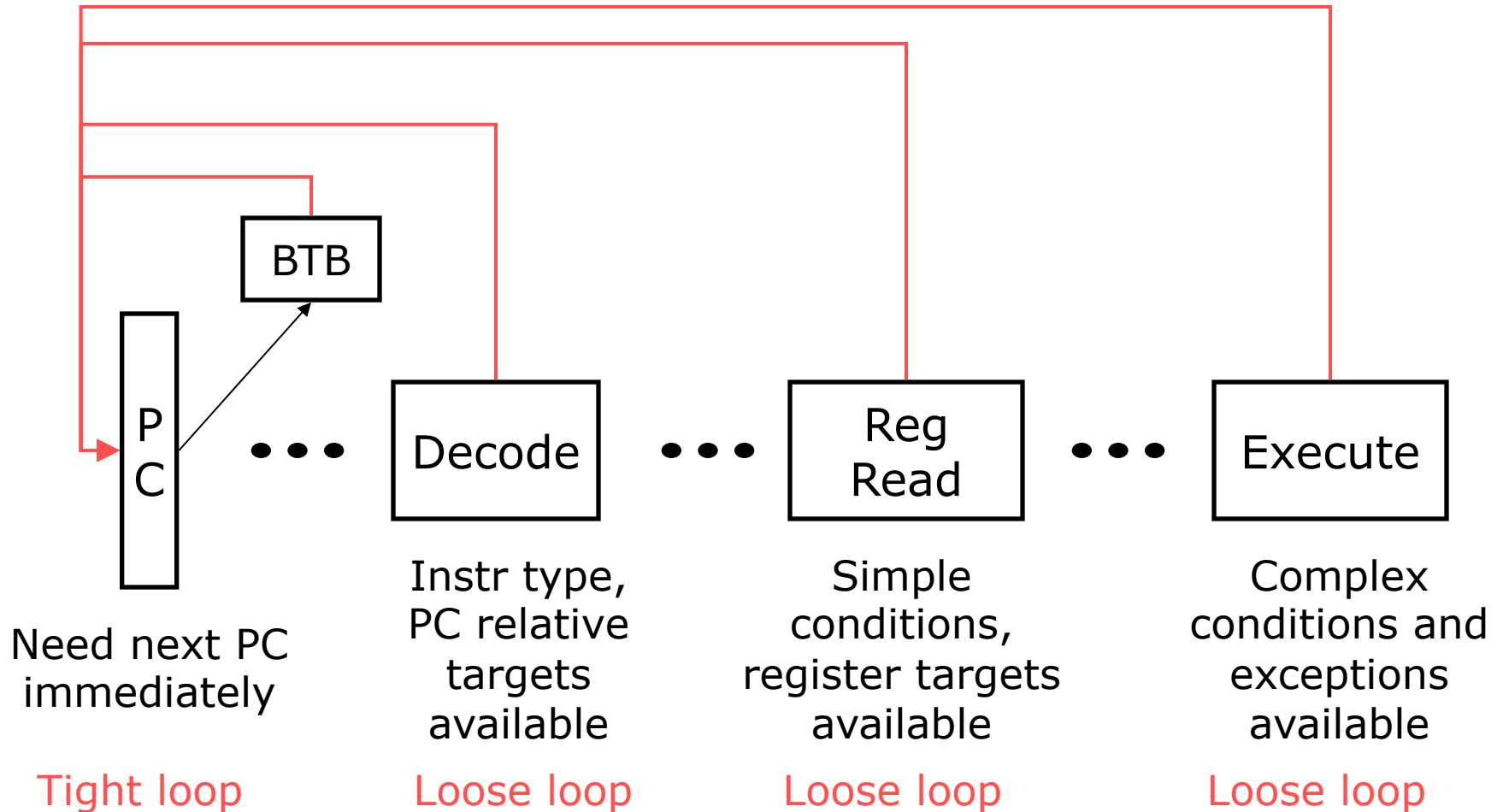


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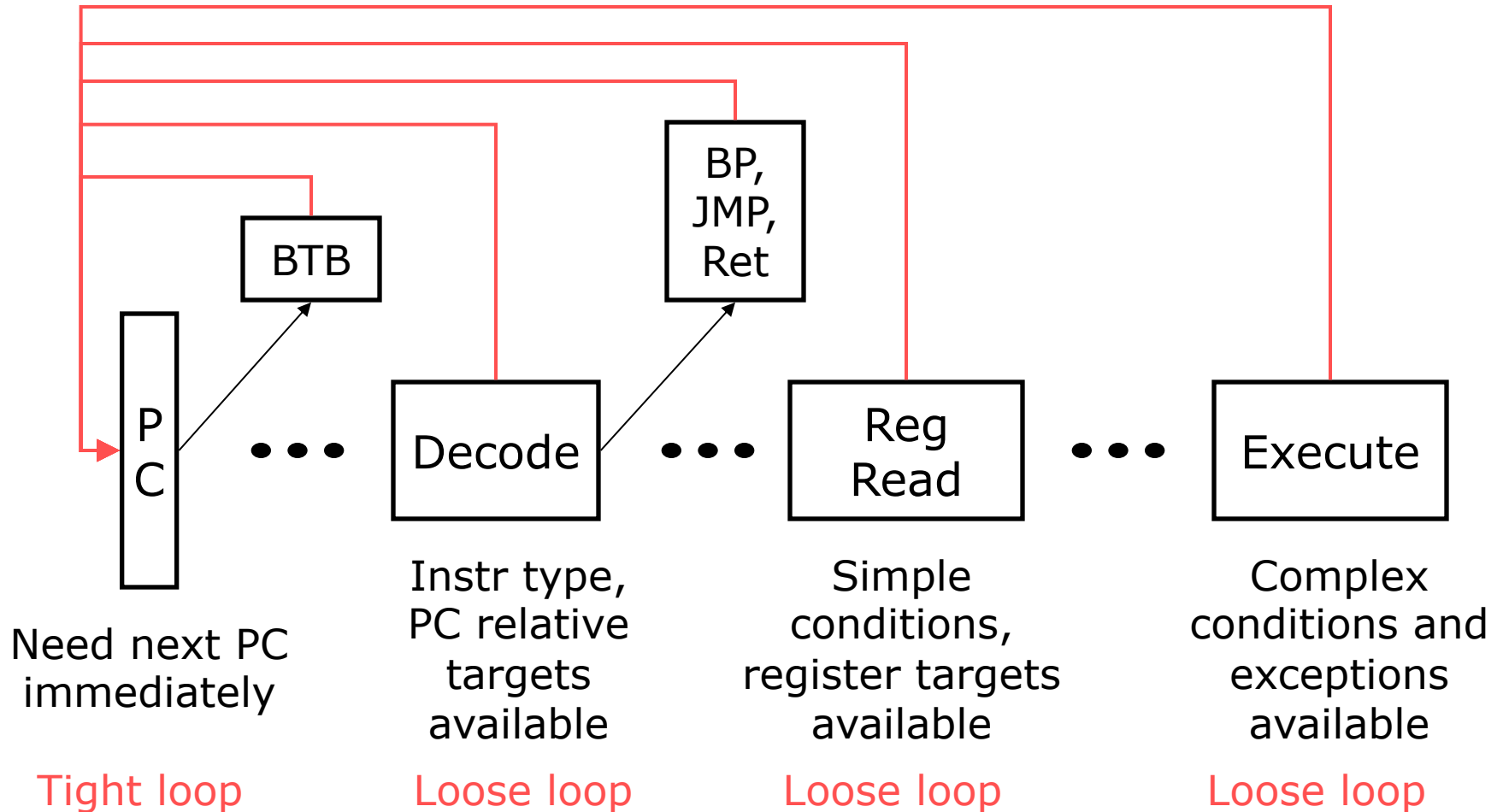
Must speculation check always be correct?

Overview of Branch Prediction



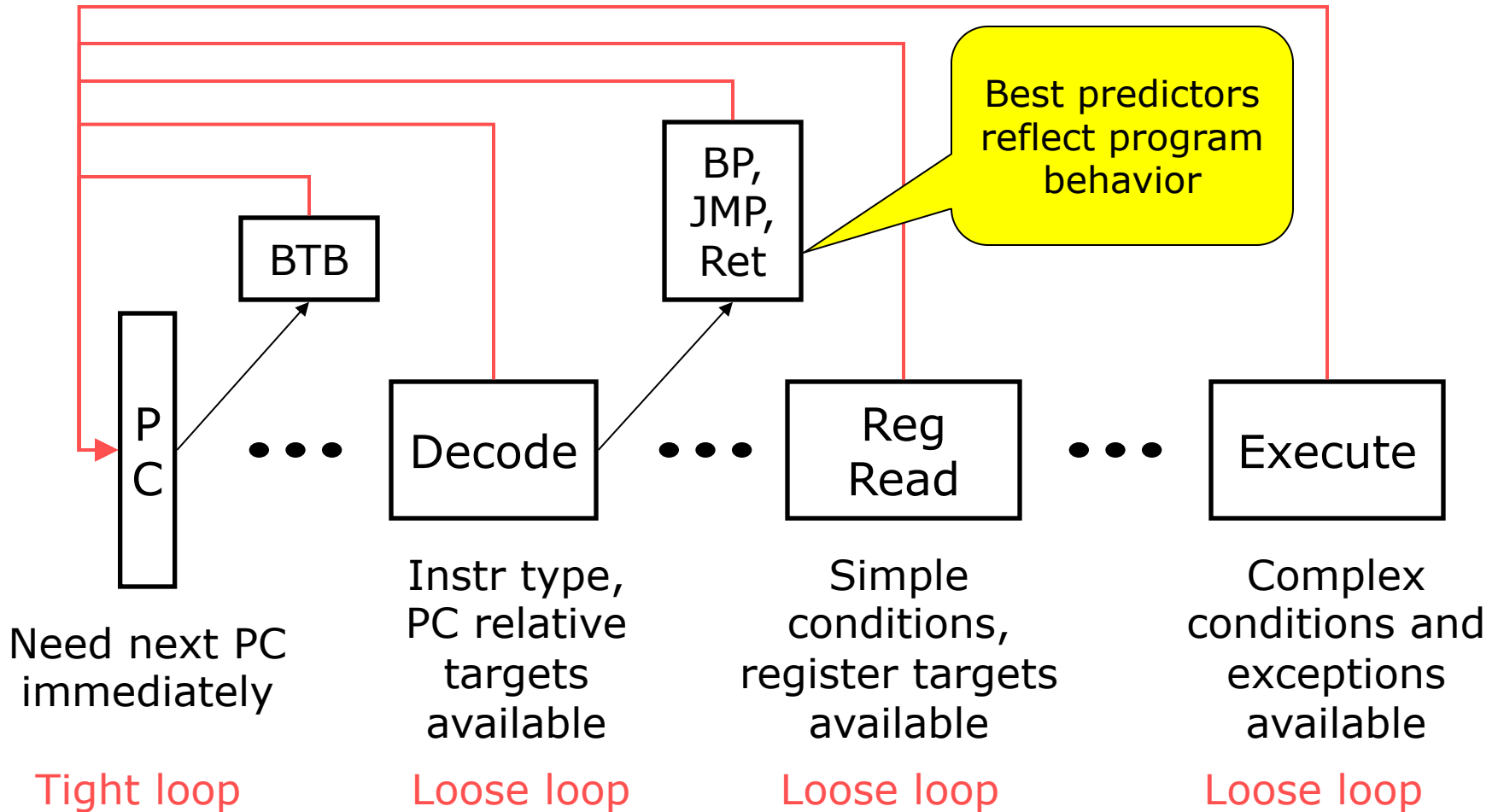
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Overview of Branch Prediction



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*Next Lecture:
Speculative Execution
& Value Management*