

Test Selection for Unified Regression Testing

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Abstract—Today’s software failures have two dominating root causes: code bugs and misconfigurations. To combat failure-inducing software changes, unified regression testing (URT) is needed to synergistically test the changed code *and* all changed production configurations for deployment reliability. However, URT could incur high cost, as it needs to run a large number of tests under multiple configurations. Regression test selection (RTS) can reduce regression testing cost. Unfortunately, no existing RTS technique reasons about code and configuration changes collectively.

We introduce Unified Regression Test Selection (uRTS) to effectively reduce the cost of URT. uRTS supports project changes on 1) code only, 2) configurations only, and 3) both code and configurations. It selects regular tests and configuration tests with a unified selection algorithm. The uRTS algorithm analyzes code and configuration dependencies of each test across runs and across configurations. uRTS provides the same safety guarantee as the state-of-the-art RTS while selecting fewer tests and, more importantly, reducing the end-to-end testing time.

We implemented uRTS on top of Ekstazi (a RTS tool for code changes) and Ctest (a configuration testing framework). We evaluate uRTS on hundreds of code revisions and dozens of configurations of five large projects. The results show that uRTS reduces the end-to-end testing time, on average, by 3.64X compared to executing all tests and 1.87X compared to a competitive reference solution that directly extends RTS for URT.

I. INTRODUCTION

Today’s software failures have two dominating root causes: faults in program code (i.e., bugs) and errors in configuration files (i.e., misconfigurations) [1]–[6]. Many software projects include some default configuration together with the code in the project repository. Modern continuous integration and deployment (CI/CD) [7]–[10] aims to quickly check and release project changes. To combat bugs and misconfigurations introduced through project changes, modern CI/CD environments widely use regression testing. Regression testing checks that project changes do not break previously working functionality. Traditional regression testing is mainly applied to (potentially changed) code under the (potentially changed) *default* configuration [11]–[13].

However, the deployed software uses *production* configurations that typically differ from the default configuration. One limitation of traditional regression testing is that the code changes are not tested under the production configurations; likewise, changes in production configurations are not tested with the code. Consequently, many code changes pass the regression tests under the default configuration but lead to failures in production. In fact, companies such as Google and Meta change configurations frequently [2], [4], [14]–[18].

They report misconfigurations [1]–[4], [19], [20] as the main cause of failures in production systems, even more frequent than code bugs. While large software organizations have started to treat configurations as important as code, e.g., using version control for configurations and reviewing configuration changes manually, much more remains to be done.

Recent research has proposed *configuration testing* to detect erroneous changes to production configurations [21]–[24]. A configuration test is a *parameterized* test [25], [26] with input parameters being configuration parameters; it runs by instantiating the input parameters with the values from production configurations (§II-A). The key idea is to connect configuration changes to tests, so that configuration changes can be tested in the context of code affected by the changes. Configuration testing can reason about the program behavior under production configurations and detect sophisticated misconfigurations that are missed by rule-based validation [14], [15], [27]–[30] or data-driven approaches [4], [31]–[36]. However, a major limitation of prior work is that configuration testing addresses only configuration changes of the *same* code version—it assumes that the code does *not* change and has only one production configuration (or if more, each production configuration is tested in isolation).

Synergistically testing code and configuration changes requires *unified regression testing* (URT). URT tests code changes both under the default configuration and under production configurations to increase deployment reliability. For configuration changes, URT tests the changed configurations against the latest code version, which may include code changes since the previous test run. URT applies when project changes are not only to code or configurations separately, but also to both code and configurations together. In large software organizations, code-configuration co-changes are common, partially due to the increasing popularity of monolithic software repositories driven by the DevOps practice of maintaining both code and production configurations [4], [37]–[39]. Inconsistencies between code and configuration changes constantly result in production failures, e.g., as Microsoft reports [4]. So, the ability to test code-configuration co-changes is important.

However, URT could be very costly because it has to run a large number of tests under multiple configurations, including the default configuration and several production configurations. Note that it is a norm that *multiple* production configurations co-exist in production deployments; for example, production systems are constantly under staged deployments with multiple versions of code or configurations [7], [24]. As a

reference, the cost of regression testing under only the default configuration is already considered high [40]–[44]. If every test needs to be run for every configuration, the regression testing cost could become unaffordable.

Regression test selection (RTS) [11], [45]–[48] can effectively reduce the cost of regression testing. RTS runs only a subset of the regression tests that are *affected* by the project changes; in other words, RTS does not run the tests whose outcome cannot change due to the recent changes. RTS is widely used in large software organizations, e.g., Google and Meta publicly report on the practice [40]–[44]. RTS is successful because project changes in CI/CD environment are incremental—they typically change a small part of a large software project, i.e., a small piece of code or a small number of configuration values. It is well documented that code changes are relatively small [49]–[51], and one study reports that 49.5% of configuration changes alter only two lines of configuration files.

Unfortunately, no existing RTS technique is tailored for URT—existing RTS techniques are designed either for code changes only [11] or for configuration changes only [21]. The former is done with *regular tests* and the latter with *configuration tests*. We use the term “test” to generically refer to either a regular test or a configuration test. No RTS technique reasons about code and configuration changes collectively, and no technique works with both regular tests and configuration tests.

We introduce *unified regression test selection* (uRTS), the first RTS technique for URT. uRTS works with project changes on 1) code only, 2) configurations only, and 3) both code and configurations. uRTS is based on the following observations:

- Configuration tests can be used to test *code* changes under production configurations, in addition to testing *configuration* changes (its original use case). In essence, a configuration test exercises code under a specific (default or production) configuration.
- A project change typically changes a small piece of code or a small number of configuration values. Therefore, only a subset of tests needs to be rerun for any change.
- The production configurations are typically largely similar. Therefore, a configuration test need not be repeatedly run for every production configuration.

uRTS selects regular tests and configuration tests with a unified algorithm. The algorithm analyzes code and configuration dependencies of each test for all configurations. uRTS first selects regular tests against the (potentially) changed code under the (potentially) changed default configuration. Thus, it checks for regression faults in the code under the default configuration. It then selects configuration tests against the (potentially) changed code under the (potentially) changed production configurations. uRTS uses a *two-dimensional comparison* analysis—comparing dependencies to the previous project revision, and comparing dependencies to the previously run configurations—to select fewer configuration tests and thus speed up testing. A configuration test is *not* selected iff *both* its code and configuration dependencies remain unchanged.

Not selecting a test could, in general, lead to *unsafe* RTS that misses a test failure.

uRTS provides the same safety guarantee as state-of-the-art RTS for code-only (e.g., Ekstazi [12]) and configuration-only changes (e.g., Ctest RTS [21]), and uRTS also guarantees safety for code-configuration co-changes. Meanwhile, uRTS is more effective than state-of-the-art RTS. Compared with traditional RTS for code changes, e.g., Ekstazi, uRTS is aware of changes on the parameter values. The parameter granularity used by uRTS is more precise than the file granularity used by Ekstazi, where any regular test that reads any default configuration file needs to be rerun even if just one out of hundreds of parameter values in the file is changed. Compared with Ctest RTS for configuration changes, uRTS selects configuration tests *across multiple production configurations*, while Ctest RTS assumes only one production configuration.

We implemented uRTS for Java and JUnit on top of Ekstazi [52], a state-of-the-art RTS tool, and Ctest [53], a configuration testing framework. Specifically, our implementation employs Ekstazi to dynamically track file dependencies of code changes and applies the instrumentation techniques of Ctest to dynamically track configuration dependencies of each test. It also uses Ctest to instantiate and run configuration tests.

We evaluate uRTS on a total of hundreds of code revisions and dozens of configuration files of five large software projects (HCommon, HDFS, HBase, Alluxio, and ZooKeeper). Some of our experiments are the *largest* RTS experiments performed on open-source projects, e.g., running all regression tests in HDFS for just one project revision takes over 6 hours on a powerful server machine. The results show that uRTS reduces the end-to-end testing time, on average, by 3.64X compared to executing all tests and 1.87X compared to a competitive reference solution that directly extends RTS for URT. Compared to *unsafe* RTS, uRTS increases the testing time by 1.93X when run for *three* configurations.

In summary, this paper makes the following contributions:

- **Concept:** We introduce Unified Regression Testing (URT) and motivate the need for RTS in URT.
- **Algorithm:** We develop uRTS, the first RTS for URT. uRTS works with project changes on code, configurations, or both. It provides the same safety guarantee as existing RTS but is more effective and applicable.
- **Implementation:** We implement uRTS on the state-of-the-art RTS tools for regular tests and configuration tests.
- **Evaluation:** We show the effectiveness of uRTS in reducing the cost of URT with large-scale experiments.
- **Data Availability:** <https://github.com/xlab-uiuc/uRTS-ae>

II. BACKGROUND

A. Configuration Testing

The terms “configuration” and “testing” refer to different concepts in different lines of work. Following Sun et al. [21], we view *configuration testing* as a technique for detecting erroneous configuration changes (manifesting as failing tests) early, to prevent them from being deployed to production

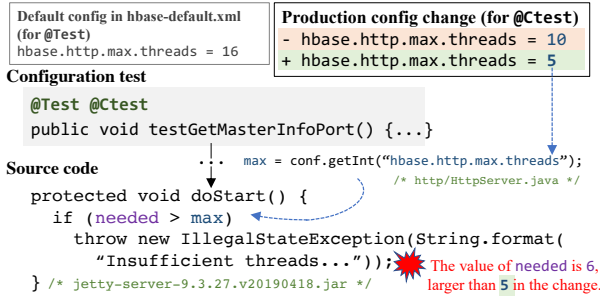


Fig. 1: A configuration test instantiated by a changed production configuration. The test fails as the code under the new production configuration throws an exception.

systems. The original idea of configuration testing was to connect configurations to software tests, so that configuration changes can be tested in the context of code affected by the changes. Unlike Sun et al. [21] who assumed that code does *not* change, in this work we support the general case where the code, as well as configurations, can change.

A configuration test $\hat{t}(\hat{P})$ is parameterized by a set of configuration parameters $\hat{P}$. Running a configuration test instantiates each input parameter from $\hat{P}$ with a concrete value from a production configuration. Like regular tests, configuration tests exercise the program and check (via assertions) certain properties (e.g., correctness, performance, security). Fig. 1 illustrates a configuration test (annotated by @Ctest) from prior work [21]. Note that *when a configuration test is instantiated by the default configuration, it is equivalent to a regular test*. This equivalence is the foundation of designing a *unified* solution for both configuration tests and regular tests.

Sun et al. [21] showed that configuration tests can be generated by transforming regular tests, similar to parameterizing existing unit tests [54]. The basic idea is to selectively parameterize a regular test t by the configuration parameters $\hat{P}$ that are 1) read by the test and 2) generic to the test logic. For a configuration test $\hat{t}(\hat{P})$, $\hat{P}$ is a subset of all the parameters read by the test t .

Configuration testing differs from approaches that explore *multiple* configurations, e.g., configuration-aware testing, combinatorial testing, or misconfiguration-injection testing [55]–[62], which sample representative configurations or misconfigurations. A configuration test focuses only on the specific configurations to be deployed to the production system.

B. Regression Test Selection (RTS) and Ekstazi

Regression testing is widely used as projects evolve to test whether the recent changes break existing functionality. Regression testing is important but also costly as many tests are run for many changes.

Regression test selection (RTS) [11], [40]–[45] reduces the cost of regression testing by selecting to run only a subset of tests, based on the most recent *code* changes. Traditional regression testing does *not* consider configuration changes. A typical RTS technique finds dependencies of each test on code parts and selects to run only the tests whose execution

can reach the changed parts. Various techniques compute dependencies dynamically or statically, and code parts range from statements and basic blocks to methods and classes to entire modules and projects.

Ekstazi. Ekstazi [12] is an open-source RTS tool [52] for Java programs. Ekstazi determines test dependencies dynamically, at the level of files, including code .class¹ files and *optionally* other files. When a test runs, Ekstazi monitors the execution to determine what files the test depends on. The Ekstazi tool provides many options, but one is crucially relevant—what files to track in the dependencies for each test. The tool default, which we call *Ekstazi*[−], tracks only .class files, although that option is *unsafe* [12]. We also evaluate an alternative, which we call *Ekstazi*⁺, that tracks .class files and configuration files.

For the test in Fig. 1, *Ekstazi*[−] finds that `testGetMasterInfoPort` depends on the test class `HttpServerTest`, the `HttpServer` class directly under test, and all other project and library classes that the execution reaches, including `Server` that contains the shown `doStart` method. *Ekstazi*⁺ additionally finds that `testGetMasterInfoPort` depends on `hbase-default.xml` when run under the default configuration (or on the production configuration file when run under it). When the project changes, Ekstazi selects to run `testGetMasterInfoPort` (or rather, selects the entire class `HttpServerTest`) if *any* of the dependent files (including `HttpServerTest` itself) changes in *any* way.

If all the classes (and other tracked files) remain the same, Ekstazi does not select a test because its behavior will be the same as before the changes. Ekstazi operates at the level of classes, not methods: 1) it is safer for object-oriented code [12], and 2) it was shown to, somewhat surprisingly, work faster *end-to-end* [12], [64]. A key aspect of RTS is to consider testing time *end-to-end*, from the moment when developers initiate testing (e.g., via `mvn test`) until they get the result. The time, called $AE(C)$ [12], includes the *analysis* phase (*A*) that determines what tests to run, the *execution* phase (*E*) that executes the tests, and (together with the execution or separately) the *collection* phase (*C*) that collects the dependencies for the next revision. Although class-level RTS selects some more tests than method-level RTS, and thus has a slower *E* phase, class-level RTS has a much faster (and safer) *A* phase. Note that in the very first run of a test (e.g., on the first run of Ekstazi, or when a new test is added), Ekstazi has no dependency info, so it always selects to run the test.

An important point is that Ekstazi is *not* configuration aware and does not handle configuration files in any special way: *Ekstazi*[−] ignores configuration files, and *Ekstazi*⁺ tracks entire configuration files.

C. RTS for Configuration Tests

Prior work [21] developed a RTS algorithm for configuration tests but under a restrictive assumption that the *code never*

¹Ekstazi tracks compiled .class files rather than source .java files because different sources can result in the same compiled file (e.g., correcting a misspelling in a comment), and the same source can result in different compiled files (e.g., using a different compiler or linking to a different library [63]). JVM executes the compiled code.

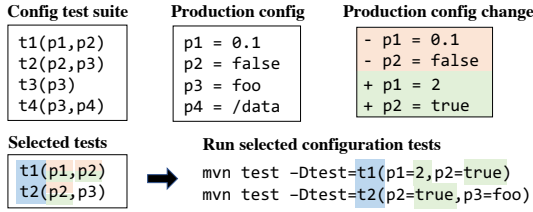


Fig. 2: RTS of configuration tests for a configuration change.

changes. As typical configuration changes only update a small number of configuration parameters [14], not all available configuration tests need to run. A configuration test $\hat{t}(\hat{P})$ is selected to run for a given configuration change if at least one parameter in $\hat{P}$ is changed. A configuration change passes if all *selected* configuration tests pass, and it fails if any selected configuration test fails. Fig. 2 shows an example RTS of configuration tests for a configuration change.

Note that this prior RTS does *not* consider code changes.

III. UNIFIED REGRESSION TESTING

The goal of *unified regression testing* (URT) is to test code changes and configuration changes *collectively* for production reliability. We define a project change as a “diff” D that updates the system code S , the default configuration C_{def} , production configurations $\mathbb{C}_{prod}$, the test suite T (for regular tests), or the test suite $\hat{T}$ (for configuration tests):

$$D : (S', C'_{def}, \mathbb{C}'_{prod}, T', \hat{T}') \rightarrow (S, C_{def}, \mathbb{C}_{prod}, T, \hat{T})$$

Note that D can be one commit or a bundle of several commits, depending on how the code/configuration repositories are maintained and how the project changes are deployed [4], [14], [37], [44], [49]. Table I lists the notation we use.

URT runs regression testing for the following combinations:

- Run regular tests T on the (changed) code S under the (changed) default configuration C_{def} ; and
- Run configuration tests $\hat{T}$ on the (changed) code S under every (changed) production configuration $C \in \mathbb{C}_{prod}$.

The former tests code under the default configuration; the latter tests code under production configurations.

URT generalizes traditional code-oriented regression testing and configuration testing. On one hand, it generalizes traditional regression testing [11] by testing code changes under not only the default configuration but also the production configurations (§III-A). On the other hand, it generalizes configuration testing [21] by testing configuration changes against the new code (§III-B). Moreover, it handles diffs that co-change both code and configurations, be they default or production configurations (§III-C). We next discuss these three cases one by one. For now, we assume no regression test selection (RTS)—we are unaware of any prior RTS tailored for URT.

A. Testing Code Changes

For a diff that only changes code or the default configuration, URT tests the changed code S under 1) the default configuration C_{def} and 2) every production configuration

Notation	Description
S	The code (including test code) of the target system
C_{def}	The default configuration
$\mathbb{C}_{prod}$	The set of production configurations
$\hat{t}(\hat{P})$	A configuration test, where $\hat{P}$ is its input parameter set
$\hat{T}$	The configuration test suite of all configuration tests $\hat{T} = \{\hat{t}(\hat{P})\}$
T	The regular test suite $T = \{t\}$, where each t only runs with C_{def}
D	A diff from $(S', C'_{def}, \mathbb{C}'_{prod}, T', \hat{T}')$ to new $(S, C_{def}, \mathbb{C}_{prod}, T, \hat{T})$

TABLE I: Notations used in the paper and their descriptions.

$C \in \mathbb{C}_{prod}$. The former is equivalent to traditional regression testing: Basically, URT runs all the tests in the test suite T ; URT passes iff all the tests pass and fails otherwise.

However, traditional regression testing does not test code changes under production configurations. URT runs configuration tests in $\hat{T}$ to check whether the code can be deployed under different production configurations. This checking is viable because each configuration test essentially tests the code under a specific configuration—a configuration test $\hat{t}(\hat{P})$ should pass for *any* correct values of parameters in $\hat{P}$. Thus, a configuration test can check the correctness of not only configuration changes but also code changes.

Without RTS, for a diff that only changes code or the default configuration, URT runs $|T| + |\hat{T}| \times |\mathbb{C}_{prod}|$ tests.

B. Testing Production Configuration Changes

For a diff that only changes production configurations, URT tests the code under the changed configurations $\mathbb{C}_{prod}$. This checking is done by running configuration tests $\hat{T}$ against the code $S = S'$ under each $C \in \mathbb{C}_{prod}$. Specifically, URT runs every configuration test $\hat{t}(\hat{P})$ in $\hat{T}$ by instantiating $\hat{P}$ with values in each production configuration C . URT passes iff every $\hat{t}(\hat{P})$ under every C passes. This part is equivalent to the original configuration testing described in §II-A, except that all prior work [21]–[23] assumes there is only one distinct production configuration, while we allow multiple. Note that multiple production configurations are the norm in real-world deployments, e.g., real-world production systems are constantly under staged deployments with multiple production configurations in place [7], [24].

Without RTS, for a diff that only changes production configurations, URT needs to run $|\hat{T}| \times |\mathbb{C}_{prod}|$ tests.

C. Testing Code-Configuration Co-Changes

For a diff that co-changes both code and production configurations, URT runs tests against the changed code S with all changed configurations $\{C_{def}\} \cup \mathbb{C}_{prod}$. URT runs all the tests in T against S under C_{def} . URT also runs all the configuration tests in $\hat{T}$ against S under every $C \in \mathbb{C}_{prod}$.

Without RTS, for a diff that co-changes both code and production configurations, URT runs $|T| + |\hat{T}| \times |\mathbb{C}_{prod}|$ tests.

IV. THE URTS ALGORITHM

As discussed in §III, unified regression testing (URT) is very expensive without effective *regression test selection* (RTS). However, no existing RTS technique is directly tailored for

Change Type	Run T	Run $\hat{T}$
$S' \neq S \vee C'_{def} \neq C_{def},$ $C'_{prod} = C_{prod}$	Prior work	Our work
$S' = S, C'_{def} = C_{def},$ $C'_{prod} \neq C_{prod}$	Need not run	Recent work [21] for $ C_{prod} = 1$ Our extension for $ C_{prod} > 1$
$S' \neq S \vee C'_{def} \neq C_{def},$ $C'_{prod} \neq C_{prod}$	Our work	Our work

TABLE II: Type of tests run for various types of changes.

URT due to not being able to reason about code and configuration co-changes collectively *and precisely*. Table II presents the types of tests run for different types of project changes, which highlights our contributions over existing RTS.

We develop the *unified regression test selection (uRTS)* to fill this important gap. The goal of uRTS is to reduce the testing time by minimizing the number of tests (including both regular tests from T and configuration tests from $\hat{T}$) to run for a given diff that could change code, configurations, or both. We base uRTS on the following key observations:

- A diff typically changes a small piece of code or a small number of configuration values [14]. Thus, only a subset of T or $\hat{T}$ needs to be run for any diff. The basic assumption of any RTS is that a relatively cheap analysis can select a subset of tests and, thus, save the time that would have been spent running unselected tests.
- A production configuration typically changes only a small number of configuration values from the default values [65]. Assuming $\hat{T}$ has been run against C_{def} , a configuration test $\hat{t}(\hat{P}) \in \hat{T}$ need not be run for any production configuration that changes none of $p \in \hat{P}$ from the default.
- The n production configurations typically only differ in a small number of configuration values [65]. A configuration test $\hat{t}(\hat{P})$ need not be repeatedly run for production configurations that share the same values of $\hat{P}$.

For a diff $D: (S', C'_{def}, C'_{prod}, T', \hat{T}') \rightarrow (S, C_{def}, C_{prod}, T, \hat{T})$, uRTS employs a two-step test selection algorithm:

- 1) Select a subset of regular tests from T to check the new code S for the new default configuration C_{def} .
- 2) Select a subset of configuration tests from $\hat{T}$ to check the new code S for each production configuration in C_{prod} .

A. Step 1: Selecting Regular Tests

If the target diff D changes the code (i.e., $S' \neq S$), uRTS first selects regular tests from T to test the code changes. uRTS applies the traditional RTS to select the tests, i.e., a test t is selected as long as D changes some code exercised by t . Our implementation uses Ekstazi, which checks for each $t \in T$ whether D changes any code file on which t depends.

If the target diff D changes the default configuration (i.e., $C'_{def} \neq C_{def}$), uRTS further selects from the remaining $t \in T$ every test that exercises at least one configuration parameter whose values differ in C'_{def} and C_{def} , i.e., the change of $C'_{def} \rightarrow C_{def}$ by D could affect the test results of t . We discuss in §V-B1 how to track configuration parameters read

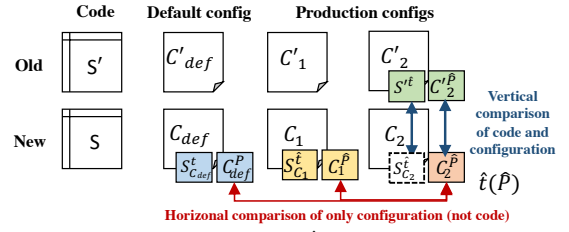


Fig. 3: Illustration of Step 2: $\hat{t}(\hat{P})$ is *not* selected for S and C_2 if either vertical or horizontal comparison matches. One optimization: *not* compare code dependencies horizontally.

by each test. Finally, uRTS runs every selected t against S under C_{def} .

Recall that a configuration test $\hat{t}(\hat{P})$ is parameterized by a set of configuration parameters $\hat{P}$. Running $\hat{t}(\hat{P})$ against S under C_{def} is equivalent to running a regular test t against S .

B. Step 2: Selecting Configuration Tests

In this step, uRTS checks the new code S under every new production configuration $C \in C_{prod}$. uRTS only selects configuration tests from $\hat{T}$ because not all tests in T can test production configurations that differ from the default.

One can use file-level RTS, like Ekstazi⁺, to track the (default or production) configuration but at the level of the *entire file(s)*. Configurations are stored in files, usually in a standard format like INI or XML. Ekstazi⁺ can track for each test what file(s) the test reads. However, tracking configuration at the file granularity is rather inefficient. A configuration file could include hundreds of parameters and their values, and be several KBs or even MBs [14]. Even if a diff only changes one configuration value, all the configuration tests need to be run because they read the configuration file. So, uRTS works at the granularity of *configuration parameters* instead of entire configuration files.

For each $C \in C_{prod}$, uRTS selects a $\hat{t}(\hat{P}) \in \hat{T}$ iff no prior test run of $\hat{t}(\hat{P})$ exercises the same code under the same values of all configuration parameters in $\hat{P}$. In other words, uRTS unselects a configuration test $\hat{t}(\hat{P})$ as long as it has been run against the same code dependencies and the same values of all parameters from $\hat{P}$ in either 1) Step 1, where a regular test t is equivalent to a configuration test $\hat{t}$ instantiated with C_{def} ; or 2) the last test round, on $(S', C'_{def}, C'_{prod})$. Consider a configuration test $\hat{t}(\hat{P})$ for a production configuration $C \in C_{prod}$, and let $C_{prod}^{<C}$ be the set of production configurations that run before C . Effectively, the analysis for selecting a test uses a two-dimensional comparison, illustrated in Fig. 3:

- **Horizontal comparison:** if the value of every parameter $p \in \hat{P}$ is the same in C as in another $C^* \in \{C_{def}\} \cup C_{prod}^{<C}$ (i.e., the test was executed against S under C^*), then $\hat{t}(\hat{P})$ is *not* selected to run for C , because running $\hat{t}$ against S under C is equivalent to a prior test run. Note that this case does *not* compare code dependencies; it is an intentional optimization as code is the same.
- **Vertical comparison:** if the value of every parameter $p \in \hat{P}$ is the same in C as in C' and every code dependency of

$\hat{t}$ under C' has the same content in S' as in S , then $\hat{t}(\hat{P})$ is *not* selected to run for C , because running $\hat{t}$ against S under C is equivalent to running $\hat{t}$ against S' under C' , which was done in the last test round.

C. Correctness

Safety. A critical property of RTS is *safety* [11], [45]—selecting all tests whose results could change due to the project changes. For diffs that only change code or the default configuration, uRTS provides the same safety as traditional file-based RTS such as Ekstazi [12], in the Ekstazi⁺ mode, which implicitly considers the default configuration. uRTS tracks configuration dependencies at the granularity of configuration *parameters* instead of configuration *files*, thus providing more efficient end-to-end testing. uRTS collects configuration dependencies by making an over-approximate estimate, which assumes that each configuration parameter read by a test influences the execution of the test. This approach simplifies the implementation and ensures that the analysis is comprehensive.

For diffs that only change production configurations, uRTS provides the same level of safety as the RTS for configuration testing [21]; uRTS is more efficient than the prior work when multiple production configurations exist. Thus, uRTS provides the same safety guarantees when reduced to special cases. Moreover, uRTS supports the most general case where both code and configurations change.

Precision. For a regular test t , uRTS selects t iff the test result could change due to the changed code S or C_{def} . For a configuration test $\hat{t}(\hat{P})$, uRTS selects $\hat{t}$ iff the code and the configuration parameters exercised by $\hat{t}$ were not already run in the current test round (“horizontal comparison”) or the last test round (“vertical comparison”). In summary, $\hat{t}(\hat{P})$ runs only *once* for the same code and the same set of configuration values of $\hat{P}$.

V. THE URTS IMPLEMENTATION

We implemented uRTS for Java and JUnit on top of Ekstazi [12] and Ctest [21]. Ekstazi is a state-of-the-art RTS tool which dynamically tracks files that each test depends on and selects tests to run if any dependency file is changed. Ctest is a configuration testing framework that intercepts configuration APIs to assign production configuration values to instantiate configuration tests. We use Ekstazi to track the code executed by each test, be it a regular or configuration test. We integrate Ctest into Ekstazi to support running configuration tests. Moreover, we extend Ekstazi’s dependency collection and analysis to track configuration parameters and their values during each test run; we also encode the configuration parameters and their values in the *dependency file* format that Ekstazi stores for each test [52].

Fig. 4 shows the workflow of our uRTS implementation. uRTS first selects tests (§IV) during the analysis phase (§V-B). To execute regular tests, uRTS uses the existing Ekstazi integration with JUnit and Maven Surefire. For each test that is not selected, uRTS reuses the test’s dependency file generated

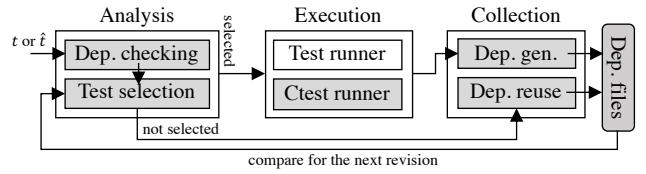


Fig. 4: uRTS implementation uses Ekstazi’s integration with JUnit; we added or enhanced the grayed components.

by an earlier equivalent run; for each test that is selected, uRTS runs the test and generates the new dependency file (§V-C).

A. Dependencies

uRTS maintains two types of dependencies for each test under each configuration $C \in \{C_{def}\} \cup C_{prod}$:

- **Code dependency:** the code files that the test depends on, in the Ekstazi form of $\langle \text{URI}, \text{checksum} \rangle$ pairs, where the file URI could be a .class file in a directory or in a .jar archive, and the checksum is a hash of the file content. Note that the same test could have different code dependencies when run under different configurations.
- **Configuration dependency:** the names and values of configuration parameters read by the test, in the form of $\langle \text{parameter}, \text{value} \rangle$ pairs. For each configuration test $\hat{t}(\hat{P})$, its configuration dependencies only include the parameters in $\hat{P}$.

uRTS maintains a dependency file (with code and configuration dependencies) for each pair of a test (identified by the test name) and a configuration (with a separate directory for dependency files for each configuration). Each dependency file is 1) (re)generated during the test run if the test is selected, or 2) reused from a dependency file of an equivalent run if the test is not selected.

B. Analysis Phase

The analysis phase of uRTS analyzes the latest code and configuration dependencies for each test (§V-B1), and decides whether or not to select the test to execute (§V-B2).

1) **Analyzing Dependency Changes:** As Ekstazi, uRTS checks whether a file dependency changes between two code versions by comparing the checksums of the file content in S' and S . To analyze configuration dependencies, uRTS needs to obtain the value of each configuration parameter in corresponding configuration $C \in \{C_{def}\} \cup C_{prod}$ and compare the current value with that recorded in a dependency file.

A seemingly easy solution is to simply parse the configuration files based on their format, which is typically a standard file format such as INI or XML. However, our experience in implementing uRTS for real-world projects shows that configurations could have complex representations, making it difficult to understand how they are interpreted by the project. Table III presents some examples from Hadoop, involving configuration variables and complex dependencies based on configuration values. It is hard to duplicate such sophisticated logic for each project.

Type	Parameter	Value
Value dep.	hadoop.tmp.dir io.seqfile.local.dir	/tmp/hadoop- user.name \${ hadoop.tmp.dir }/io/local
Complex dep.	dfs.ha.namenodes. CID dfs.namenode.rpc-address. CID.NN1 dfs.namenode.rpc-address. CID.NN2	NN1.NN2 machine1.example.com:8020 machine2.example.com:8020

TABLE III: Two examples of sophisticated configuration in the Hadoop project which makes it difficult to analyze configuration changes by simply parsing a configuration file.

Rather than reverse-engineering sophisticated configuration logic, our insight is to use a more general, cleaner solution to obtain configuration parameter values by reusing the project’s own configuration APIs for reading configuration parameter values.² uRTS instruments the same configuration APIs for the collection phase (§V-C). Using the same interface to collect and compare configuration dependencies ensures the consistency of the analysis. Specifically, we implement a configuration reader that invokes the Get API to read the configuration values of a configuration parameter. The reader returns all the configuration parameters and their values from a given configuration file.

2) **Test Selection:** uRTS implements the test selection algorithm (§IV) based on dependency analysis. If there is no dependency file recorded (e.g., on the first run of uRTS, or when a new test or a new production configuration is added), the test is selected to run.

Step 1 (§IV-A) Selecting regular tests. For each test t against S under C_{def} , uRTS checks whether or not the configuration dependencies of t (the default parameter values read by t) change. If so, t is selected to run. Otherwise, uRTS further checks whether any code-dependency changes. If so, uRTS selects the test t to execute. Otherwise, if neither the configuration nor the code dependencies change, uRTS does not select t .

Step 2 (§IV-B) Selecting configuration tests. For each configuration test $\hat{t}(\hat{P})$ under a given production configuration file $C \in \mathbb{C}_{prod}$, uRTS first “horizontally” checks whether any value of the $\hat{t}$ ’s input parameters $\hat{P}$ in C differs from the corresponding value in the configuration-dependency of $\hat{t}$ previously executed under both C_{def} and other production configurations. (Note that $\hat{t}$ could read more parameters than those in $\hat{P}$, but the values of parameters not in $\hat{P}$ are the *same* as in the default configuration.) If there is no such configuration difference, uRTS does not select $\hat{t}$.

Otherwise, uRTS further “vertically” compares 1) the current values of $\hat{P}$ in C against the prior configuration dependency of C' and 2) the current code dependency against the prior code dependency of $\hat{t}$. uRTS selects $\hat{t}$ iff either code or configuration dependencies change.

²Modern software projects use uniform APIs for reading configurations, which is the basis for recent configuration analysis techniques [21], [22], [61], [66]–[73]. For example, in many Java projects, the Get APIs can be abstracted as a method of the form `String get(String parameter)`. It takes a parameter name as the input and returns its value (which is further typecast by higher level APIs). Many Get APIs are declared in wrapper classes on top of `java.util.Properties` for Java projects. Ctest [21] instruments the Get APIs to generate configuration tests from regular tests.

```

1 public String get(String name) {
2     String urtParam = name;
3     String[] names = handleDeprecation(
4         deprecationContext.get(), name);
5     String result = null;
6     for(String n : names) {
7         urtParam = n;
8         result = substituteVars(getProperty(n));
9     }
10    ConfigListener.record(urtParam, result);
11    return result;
12 } /* .../hadoop/conf/Configuration.java */

```

Fig. 5: Instrumentation for the Get API in Hadoop. The get method is the lowest level API used by high-level APIs, e.g., getInt and getBool. handleDeprecation replaces deprecated names.

```

1 public static void recordConfig(String configFile) {
2     Configuration conf = new Configuration(configFile);
3     for(String parameter : conf.getAllKeys()) {
4         String value = conf.get(parameter);
5         ConfigListener.record(parameter, value);
6     }
7 }

```

Fig. 6: The method we added for the Hadoop project to read all the configuration parameter values of a given file. Hadoop code uses the Get API to read configuration values.

C. Collection Phase

1) **Not selected tests:** If a test under $C \in \{C_{def}\} \cup \mathbb{C}_{prod}$ is not selected, it means that uRTS finds an equivalent test run with the same code and configuration dependencies during horizontal/vertical comparison. In this case, uRTS copies corresponding dependency files to update current dependencies.

2) **Selected tests:** For tests that are selected to run, uRTS executes the test and (re)generates the code and configuration dependencies. uRTS uses Ekstazi to track code dependencies, as the .class files on which the test execution depends (§II-B). Ekstazi instruments class loading and other class uses (e.g., dereference of static fields) to track the classes, and then maps each class name to the URI file location that stores the class.

uRTS collects configuration dependencies with the instrumentation of the configuration APIs. uRTS applies the techniques of Ctest [21] to instrument the configuration APIs to monitor the configuration parameters read by each test during the test execution. Fig. 5 shows the instrumentation for the Get API of the Hadoop project, which invokes the same record method as in Fig. 6.

D. Optimizations

We apply several optimizations in the uRTS implementation to reduce the analysis time.

First, the horizontal comparison only analyzes configuration dependencies, not code dependencies. The reason is that the code revision (and, thus, the content/checksum of the .class files) does not change when testing C_{def} and any $C \in \mathbb{C}_{prod}$ (see Fig. 3); hence, if the configuration dependencies are the same, the test executes the same, and both code and configuration dependencies are the same. If the configuration dependencies differ, then the test is selected to rerun anyway, so both its code and configuration dependencies will be updated. Recall that code dependencies for a configuration

test can differ when running the test under C_{def} or some $C \in \mathbb{C}_{prod}$. This optimization reduces the analysis time, because checking the new code dependencies is expensive due to the need to recompute checksums of all the dependent files.

Moreover, because configuration dependency comparison is computationally much cheaper than code dependency comparison (the former only involves string comparison without checksum calculation), our implementation always analyzes configuration dependencies before code dependencies. When configuration dependencies differ, it saves the overhead of comparing code dependencies (as the test is selected already).

VI. EXPERIMENTAL METHODOLOGY

Evaluating uRTS on open-source projects is challenging, because most projects do not offer a DevOps-based environment with both code and production configuration changes. RTS research often uses commits from the revision history of open-source projects for code (and default configuration) changes [12], [13], [74], but it is non-trivial to collect real-world production configurations and their revision histories, which are typically proprietary.

We create an evaluation set on top of the Ctest dataset [53] which contains 100 deployed configurations collected from public Docker images on DockerHub [75] for five large, widely used open-source projects. We treat those deployed configurations as production configurations and use multiple deployed configurations as different, evolving revisions of one production configuration. Moreover, we use the most recent compilable commits as our evaluation project changes. Table IV shows the evaluated projects, the statistics of code commits and configurations, and the test suites.

Evaluated Projects and Commits. We use the same set of open-source projects as recent work on configuration testing [21], [22]: HCommon, HDFS, HBase, Alluxio, and ZooKeeper. As all these projects use JUnit as their testing framework,³ we integrated Ekstazi and uRTS into their build and test systems. All the projects use Apache Maven for building source code and the Maven Surefire plugin for running tests.

For each project, our evaluation uses 50 recent commits. Specifically, we used the newest released version as of January 2022 of each project as the last commit and checked out 49 prior compilable commits that each modifies relevant code or configuration. Among these commits, some in HCommon, HDFS, and Alluxio change the default configuration included as a part of the codebases. No commit in HBase and ZooKeeper changes the default configuration.

Production Configs. We use real-world configurations of each project from public Docker images as the production configurations in our evaluation. Those configurations were collected in the Ctest dataset [53]. We treat each project as having two production configurations in the evolution, to represent the simplest case of multiple configurations. In general, the more production configurations a system deploys, the *more* benefits uRTS brings.

³The Ekstazi tool that we obtained [52] supported only JUnit 4 (and 3); we extended Ekstazi to support JUnit 5 to evaluate ZooKeeper.

Project	Module	LOC	# Rev.	# Conf. files	# Rev. on $\mathbb{C}_{prod}$	# Test Classes Regular	Classes [avg] Config
HCommon	hadoop-common	256K	50	20	18	510	259
HDFS	hadoop-hdfs	371K	50	20	18	751	751
HBase	hbase-server	427K	50	20	17	295	158
Alluxio	core	154K	50	20	17	247	118
ZooKeeper	zookeeper-server	101K	50	20	19	299	187

TABLE IV: Projects, commits, configuration files, and tests (regular and configuration) used in the evaluation.

Unfortunately, Docker images do not provide a revision history of the deployed configurations. Therefore, we use the configurations to simulate changes in the production configurations. For each project, we divide all the configurations into two groups to represent two production configurations. For each group with n configurations, we assume they are n revisions of one configuration.

We associate each configuration change with randomly chosen project commits; each commit could change either code (with default configuration) or both code (with default configuration) and some production configuration(s). For each of the two groups of n configurations, we independently choose commits, so some commits change both configuration files. The number of commits with at least one production configuration change is 18 for HCommon, 18 for HDFS, 17 for HBase, 17 for Alluxio, and 19 for ZooKeeper (Table IV). We have no commit that changes only a production configuration; for such commits, uRTS would bring even *more* benefits.

Configuration Tests. The evaluated projects do not come with explicit configuration test suites. We use Ctest [53] to transform existing tests into configuration tests by parameterizing those tests with configuration parameters (§II-A). While the Ctest dataset [53] provides the configuration tests for the five evaluated projects, those provided configuration tests were generated for only one version of each project (as the Ctest work did not consider code evolution [21]), and the version is older than all the versions used in our evaluation. Thus, we generate all the configuration tests for each commit in our evaluation following Sun et al. [21].

Hardware and System Settings. All the experiments are run on Azure VMs with dual-core CPUs and 14GB of RAM [76], Ubuntu 20.04.2, and Java 64-bit 1.8.0. The experiments spent 2000+ hours of machine time in total.

Baseline. We compare uRTS with the ReTestAll baseline that conducts URT without RTS (§III). ReTestAll is a common baseline used in RTS research [45]. ReTestAll runs all the regular tests in T if the target commit changes the code or the default configuration; it also runs all the configuration tests in $\hat{T}$ for each production configuration. With the setup of two production configurations, ReTestAll runs $|T| + 2 \times |\hat{T}|$ tests for every commit. To limit the machine time used in our experiments, we do not measure ReTestAll time for all 50 commits but only run the first and last commit in the range and use their average time for all the commits. The difference between the time for the first and last commit is, on average, just 1.0%. For the number of test classes, we extract the precise number for every commit, but the difference is again small,

Project	ReTestAll		Ekstazi ⁺		uRTS		$T_{+R}\%$	$N_{+R}\%$	$T_{UR}\%$	$N_{UR}\%$	$T_{U+}\%$	$N_{U+}\%$	Ekstazi ⁻		$T_{U-}\%$	$N_{U-}\%$
	time [sec]	# classes	time [sec]	# classes	time [sec]	# classes							time [sec]	# classes		
HCommon	4467.06	1030.50	1303.06	133.40	542.01	51.12	29.17%	12.94%	12.13%	4.96%	41.60%	38.32%	220.67	14.82	245.62%	345.03%
HDFS	65283.01	2049.00	45346.87	759.27	30614.97	478.44	69.46%	37.06%	46.90%	23.35%	67.51%	63.01%	13818.32	199.58	221.55%	239.72%
HBase	2844.60	611.00	1303.90	105.76	652.03	45.27	45.84%	17.31%	22.92%	7.41%	50.01%	42.81%	381.32	31.38	170.99%	144.27%
Alluxio	1831.13	485.50	1401.36	212.22	998.18	97.53	76.53%	43.71%	54.51%	20.09%	71.23%	45.96%	529.78	73.65	188.42%	132.43%
ZooKeeper	3168.50	677.00	1624.30	208.54	701.71	69.21	51.26%	30.80%	22.15%	10.22%	43.20%	33.19%	458.92	46.59	152.91%	148.53%
Σ/avg	5451.09	842.33	2810.57	216.35	1499.39	94.34	51.56%	25.69%	27.51%	11.20%	53.35%	43.61%	776.72	50.19	193.04%	187.98%

TABLE V: Test run results of ReTestAll, Ekstazi⁺, uRTS, and Ekstazi⁻. The average reduction of testing time and the number of selected test classes are denoted by $T_{+R}\%$, $N_{+R}\%$ when comparing Ekstazi⁺ to ReTestAll; $T_{UR}\%$, $N_{UR}\%$ when comparing uRTS to ReTestAll; $T_{U+}\%$, $N_{U+}\%$ when comparing uRTS to Ekstazi⁺; and $T_{U-}\%$, $N_{U-}\%$ when comparing uRTS to Ekstazi⁻.

on average, just 0.6% between the min and max.

References. We compare uRTS with two reference solutions, Ekstazi⁺ and Ekstazi⁻ (§ II-B). For Ekstazi⁺, we integrated Ctest with Ekstazi, and configured Ekstazi to track for each configuration test its *file dependencies* that include both code and configuration files. If a configuration test depends on a configuration file that had *any* change from a previous run, then the test is selected. We expect Ekstazi⁺ to be less effective than uRTS because *file granularity* is rather coarse for configuration dependencies—a configuration file could include hundreds of configuration values [65], while a configuration change typically modifies only a small number of parameters [14]. In contrast, uRTS tracks configuration dependencies at the *parameter granularity*.

We also evaluate Ekstazi⁻, the Ekstazi default that does not track configuration files and only concerns code changes. The goal is to understand the cost of URT and uRTS over *unsafe*, code-driven regression testing.

Granularity. We select tests at the granularity of test *classes* (not test methods). The reasons are: 1) selecting classes is safer than methods (e.g., due to code changes that affect dynamic dispatch) [12], and 2) selecting classes was shown to outperform selecting methods [12], [64], [77].

Metrics. To evaluate RTS, we measure two main metrics: 1) the end-to-end testing time, and 2) the number of selected test classes. For the testing time, we measure the time to *execute the build command* that developers use to execute tests, specifically `mvn test` for all the evaluated projects. For the commonly running tests, we did *not* modify any build configuration in any project’s build files; hence, the speedup that we observe in our experiments reflects what developers would have experienced.

VII. EVALUATION RESULTS

Our evaluation aims to answer the following questions:

- 1) How effective is uRTS?
- 2) What is the overhead to support URT?
- 3) How much does uRTS save for configuration changes?
- 4) Are both of the two-dimensional comparisons needed?

A. RQ1: Savings of Testing Time and The Number of Tests

End-to-end testing time is the key metric to measure the effectiveness of RTS in reducing the testing costs; as an additional metric, we use the number of selected test classes. Table V shows the RTS results, in terms of the two metrics,

of uRTS, compared with ReTestAll and Ekstazi⁺. (uRTS provides the *same* safety guarantees as Ekstazi⁺.)

For each project, Table V shows the average number of all revisions; lower numbers are better. We compare uRTS over ReTestAll and Ekstazi⁺ in terms of testing time ($T_{UR}\%$, $T_{U+}\%$) and the number of test classes ($N_{UR}\%$, $N_{U+}\%$), respectively. We compute the ratio for each commit, average the ratios via geometric mean over all commits, and then average the results across all projects, obtaining an *unweighted* average that equally treats all projects (so the results from the largest project do not dominate the overall average).

Main Results. On average, uRTS only takes 53.35% of testing time compared with Ekstazi⁺ and 27.51% of testing time compared with ReTestAll. Stated differently, *uRTS reduces the end-to-end testing time by 1.87X compared with Ekstazi⁺ and 3.64X compared with ReTestAll.*

In terms of the number of test classes, uRTS only selects 43.61% and 11.20% of test classes compared with Ekstazi⁺ and ReTestAll, respectively. It is not uncommon for RTS to select a smaller percentage of tests than the percentage of the overall time savings [12], [13], for two reasons: 1) the overall time includes not just the test execution time but also the building overhead that is the same both with and without RTS; and 2) the test execution time itself is not proportional to the number of selected tests because the selected tests are typically *longer-running* and *larger*, with more dependencies, than the unselected tests.

For example, for Alluxio, the test class `FileSystemFactoryTest` runs significantly longer than others. If it is selected, its running time dominates the overall testing time. It is selected often in our evaluation (104 times by uRTS and 135 times by Ekstazi⁺, out of 150=50×3 cases), which explains the gap between $T_{U+}\%$ of 71.23% and $N_{U+}\%$ of 45.96%. For HDFS, both $T_{U+}\%$ and $N_{U+}\%$ are higher than for the other projects due to a configuration parameter, `dfs.namenode.datanode.registration.ip-hostname-check`. 584 test classes depend on this parameter, so when it is changed, all 584 tests are selected.

The $T_{+R}\%$, $N_{+R}\%$ results of Ekstazi⁺ show the effectiveness of RTS in reducing the test cost of URT. We can see that even a coarse-grained RTS technique like Ekstazi⁺ can effectively reduce the testing time to 51.56%, on average, and the number of test classes to 25.69%, compared with the baseline (ReTestAll). The $T_{U+}\%$, $N_{U+}\%$ results of uRTS show the further effectiveness of configuration-aware RTS for

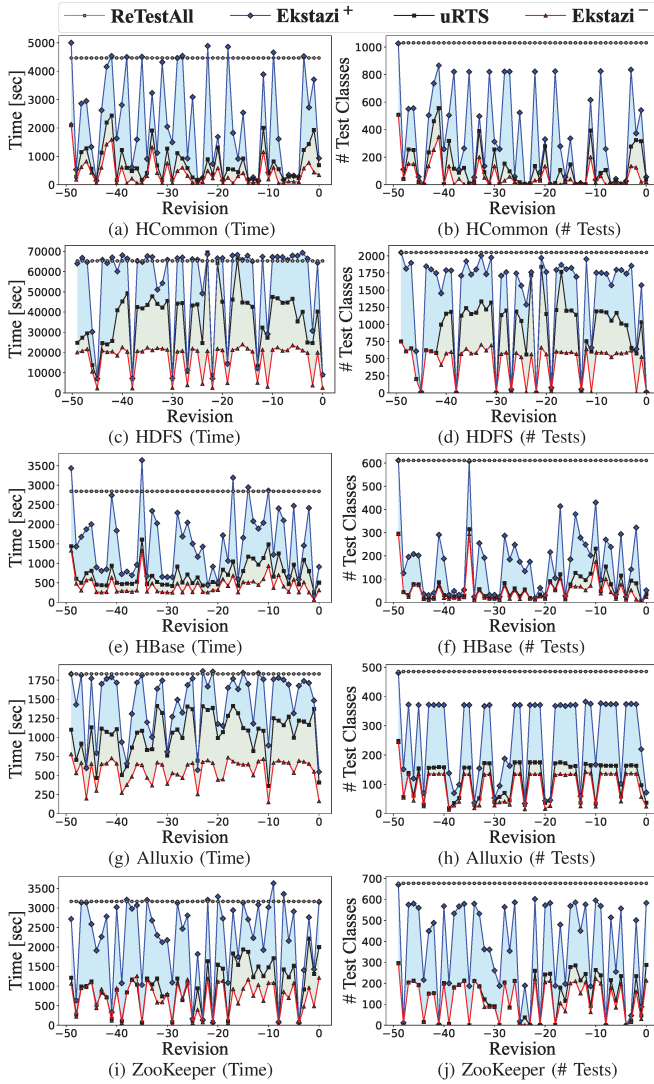


Fig. 7: End-to-end testing time in seconds (a,c,e,g,i) and number of selected test classes (b,d,f,h,j) for all five projects.

URT—tracking configuration dependencies at the parameter granularity can further reduce the testing time to 53.35%, on average, and the number of test classes to 43.61%, compared with the RTS at the file granularity (Ekstazi⁺). In brief, Ekstazi⁺ almost halves the time of ReTestAll, and uRTS further almost halves the time of Ekstazi⁺. The results indicate that with uRTS, URT is substantially cheaper.

Fig. 7 visualizes the RTS results per commit across the evaluated projects. Ekstazi⁺ has an even higher testing cost than ReTestAll in the initial commits, because Ekstazi⁺ needs to run the entire test suites (both T and $\hat{T}$) and collect test dependencies. Collecting dependencies is also the reason why the testing time of Ekstazi⁺ is sometimes higher than of ReTestAll for later commits (e.g., Fig. 7e). In contrast, uRTS can reduce the testing time effectively compared with Ekstazi⁺ and ReTestAll from the very first commit by avoiding redundant test runs via the “horizontal” selection across the configurations (more discussion in §VII-D).

Project	Ekstazi ⁺ [sec]		uRTS [sec]		T_U %		
	C_1	C_2	C_1	C_2	C_1	C_2	$C_1 + C_2$
HCommon	1555.20	1471.42	260.01	255.73	16.72%	17.38%	17.04%
HDFS	22215.74	19965.39	13748.08	3978.08	61.88%	19.92%	42.02%
HBase	1154.25	1127.30	183.58	88.16	15.90%	7.82%	11.91%
Alluxio	555.61	535.49	276.40	206.85	49.75%	38.63%	44.29%
ZooKeeper	1011.87	985.09	61.51	52.98	6.08%	5.38%	5.73%
Σ/avg	1862.64	1771.97	406.92	250.32	21.85%	14.13%	18.50%

TABLE VI: Test time for Ekstazi⁺ and uRTS, with production configuration change in every commit.

B. RQ2: Overhead of URT

To understand the overhead of URT over *unsafe* regression testing that ignores configuration changes, we compare the end-to-end testing time (T_U %) and the number of selected test classes (T_U %) of uRTS over the *unsafe* Ekstazi⁻. Note that Ekstazi⁻ only tests code changes under the default configuration, while uRTS tests three different configurations (one default and two production).

Table V and Fig. 7 show the results. On average, uRTS for three different configurations takes 1.93X of testing time and 1.88X test classes over Ekstazi⁻. With uRTS, testing three configurations (the default configuration and two production configurations) does not even double the testing costs. The results indicate that with uRTS, the cost of URT is close to traditional regression testing.

C. RQ3: Focus on Configuration Changes

uRTS is expected to reduce more testing costs over Ekstazi⁺ when configuration changes are more frequent. For example, Meta reported that configuration changes are even more frequent than source-code changes [14]. We next focus on RTS results with more frequent production configurations. To better understand how uRTS works for configuration changes, we focus on the subset of commits with at least one production configuration change. Table VI shows the RTS results in terms of the testing time but broken down for each of the two production configurations separately (we omit the ReTestAll results due to the space limitation). uRTS takes 21.85% and 14.13% of the time of Ekstazi⁺ for production configurations C_1 and C_2 , respectively. The testing time of uRTS is $\approx 1/4$ for C_1 and $\approx 1/7$ for C_2 of the time spent by Ekstazi⁺, across all projects. If we consider both C_1 and C_2 , uRTS takes only 18.50%. We can contrast the overall average for these configuration-related commits, 18.50% (Table VI), vs. the overall average for all commits, 53.35% (Table V); the percentage is substantially lower, as expected.

D. RQ4: Effectiveness of Two-Dimensional Comparison

For each configuration test, uRTS makes the selection decision by two-dimensional comparisons (§IV-B). It “horizontally” compares the dependencies with early test run of the same code version but different configuration(s), while “vertically” compares with the previous code version but (potentially) the same configuration. We analyzed uRTS performance with only horizontal and only vertical comparison;

the results show that the comparisons in both dimensions are necessary—neither dimension subsumes the other. On average, uRTS selects 330 test classes by vertical comparison, 164 by horizontal comparison, and *only* 108 by two-dimensional comparisons. We omit detailed per-project information due to the space limitation.

VIII. THREATS TO VALIDITY

The threats to external validity mainly lie in the evaluated projects and datasets. To reduce such threats, we use recent releases of real-world projects and deployed configuration files from the Ctest dataset [21]. However, we synthesized configuration changes using different configuration files from DockerHub as different versions. Future work should consider more diverse datasets.

The threats to internal validity mainly lie in the potential bugs in our implementations and experimental scripts. We extensively review the code and carefully check the results.

The threats to construction validity mainly lie in the metrics. We consider not only the number of selected tests but chiefly the end-to-end testing time. The time that the developers wait, from initiating a test-suite run for a new code revision until all the test outcomes are available, is the most relevant for RTS.

IX. DISCUSSION

Generality. Our uRTS implementation builds on Ekstazi with dynamic RTS. We chose Ekstazi because it is open source [52], robust, and was used in several studies [12], [64], [78]–[80]. However, the key principles of uRTS—1) tracking configuration dependencies at the level of configuration parameters rather than configuration files, 2) performing both horizontal and vertical comparisons, 3) comparing parameter values across multiple production configurations not just against the default—can be applied to other dynamic RTS, whether at a finer granularity of code dependencies (e.g., method) or coarser (e.g., modules).

In fact, we can view the idea of tracking configuration parameters rather than configuration files as an application of a general idea to track dependencies at a finer rather than coarser granularity whenever it provides a benefit, i.e., the somewhat higher cost of collection and analysis provides an even higher savings by unselecting tests. Nanda et al. [81] discuss tracking configuration files, like Ekstazi⁺, but not the granularity of tracking configuration parameters instead of files. For any novel application of RTS, it is important to evaluate what granularity level provides a better *end-to-end* time, even if it selects *more* tests to run (e.g., class-level RTS is better than method-level RTS despite selecting more tests). Our experiments show that uRTS provides a better *end-to-end* time than Ekstazi⁺ and also selects *fewer* tests.

Selection granularity. Our evaluation uses test class as the selection granularity. uRTS supports other selection granularity such as test *method*—both Ekstazi and Ctest can select tests at the method granularity. Although prior studies [12], [64], [77] found that RTS based on class dependencies was more effective, recent work [64] shows that RTS can potentially

benefit from a hybrid approach that uses different granularities. We leave the hybrid approach for uRTS as future work.

Nondeterministic tests. One concern, especially for large codebases, is that tests may be nondeterministic and have a different outcome even for the same code and configuration dependencies. An RTS technique is still safe if it unselects a test when its executions *observed* in prior runs do not change, even if the test may have other executions that could change. If developers want to check more executions of a test, they need to run the test multiple times.

X. OTHER RELATED WORK

RTS has been studied for 25+ years since seminal work in the late 1990’s [45], [82]. Several surveys [11], [46]–[48] provide a broad overview. Early research focused on selecting as few tests as possible from the regression test suites, but later work focused on reducing the end-to-end regression testing time. While early techniques tracked test dependencies at fine granularity levels (e.g., basic blocks [45], [83]), over time the dependencies got coarser (e.g., methods [84], classes [12], [64], [77], [80], [85], and modules [13], [86]). RTS is widely used in practice [40]–[44], [87], [88].

RTS for configuration-aware regression testing [57], [89] focuses on the *generation* of configurations and *prioritization of configurations* during regression testing, while uRTS focuses on *production* configurations and *selection of tests*. The prior work implicitly assumes that all regular tests can be used as configuration tests (i.e., $\hat{T} = T$) and aims to generate (or “select”) configurations from the large configuration space. However, bugs that manifest for generated configurations may not manifest for real production configurations. Likewise, bugs (and misconfigurations) that manifest for production configurations may be missed with generated configurations.

XI. CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have presented test selection uRTS for unified regression testing (URT) for both code and configuration changes. uRTS selects a subset of tests to run and provides the safety guarantees as traditional RTS. uRTS reduces the end-to-end testing time by 1.87X, on average, compared to Ekstazi⁺, and by 3.64X compared to executing all tests. uRTS is a step toward making URT practical and widely adopted.

Data Availability: <https://github.com/xlab-uiuc/uRTS-ae>

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