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SECURE KEY EXCHANGE WITH RANDOM CHALLENGE RESPONSES IN CLOUD

BINU V. P

RESEARCH SCHOLAR

DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER APPLICATIONS

COCHIN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

COCHIN

DR. SREEKUMAR A

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER APPLICATIONS

COCHIN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

COCHIN

ABSTRACT

With rapid development of cloud computing, more and more enterprises will outsource their sensitive data for sharing in a cloud. To keep the shared data confidential against untrusted cloud service providers (CSPs), a natural way is to store only the encrypted data in a cloud. The key problems of this approach include establishing access control for the encrypted data. We establish a secure challenge response protocol for sharing a secret key in the cloud environment where users want to access a document encrypted by an owner without the intervention of the service provider. In order to do this, user need to get the key from the document owner in a secure way. Any trusted users in the environment can obtain the key using random challenges. The challenge response protocol uses quadratic residuosity techniques from number theory. The proposed scheme does not use any encryption techniques so the computation requirement is greatly reduced and hence it can also be used efficiently in devices with limited computation power.

KEYWORDS

Key exchange; Random Challenge; Secure Cloud; Quadratic Residuosity.

INTRODUCTION

Cloud computing [10], as an emerging computing paradigm, enables users to remotely store their data in a cloud, so as to enjoy services on-demand. Migrating data from the user side to the cloud offers great convenience to users, since they can access data in the cloud anytime and anywhere, using any device, without caring about the capital investment to deploy the hardware infrastructures. Especially for small and medium-sized enterprises with limited budgets, they can achieve cost savings and the flexibility to scale (or shrink) investments on-demand, by using cloud-based services to manage projects, enterprise-wide contacts and schedules, and the like.

However, allowing a Cloud Service Provider (CSP), operated for making a profit, to take care of confidential corporate data, raises underlying security and privacy issues. For instance, an untrustworthy CSP may sell the confidential information about an enterprise to its closest business competitors for making a profit. Therefore, a natural way to keep sensitive data confidential against an untrusted CSP is to store only the encrypted data in the cloud.

But there are application scenarios where users want to access the data encrypted and store by other users (owners) in a corporate environment. This raises a situation where a secret key used to encrypt a document must be shared among the users for mutually sharing documents. Consider the following application scenario [9] Company A pays a CSP for sharing corporate data in cloud servers. Suppose the sales department (SD), the research and development department (RDD), and the finance department (FD) are collaborating in Project X. The SD manager wants to store an encrypted user requirement analysis (URA) in the cloud, so that only the personnel that have secret key can access the document as shown in Fig. 1. The CSP must maintain proper authentication mechanism and access control policies for granting access but the secret key must be shared directly to the user by the owner.

Diffie-Hellman Key exchange was used to jointly establish a shared secret key over an insecure communications channel. This key can then be used to encrypt subsequent communications using a symmetric key cipher. But this technique cannot be used to agree upon a specific key by the sender and the receiver.

The proposed scheme can be used to establish a specific shared secret key between sender and the receiver with the help of random challenges.

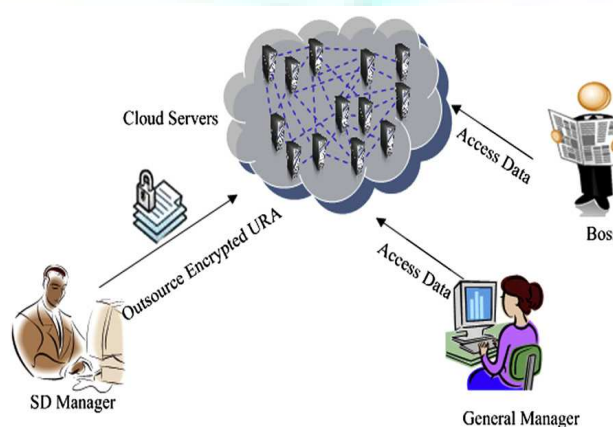


FIGURE 1: THE SAMPLE SCENARIO

SYSTEM MODEL

We assume that the system is composed of the following parties: the CSP, the trusted third party (TTP), enterprise users, end users, and internal trusted parties (ITPs). The first two parties can be easily understood: the CSP operates a large number of interconnected cloud servers with abundant storage capacity and computation power to provide high quality services and the TTP is responsible for generating keys for the CSP and enterprise users. Company A that pays for

sharing corporate data in cloud servers is an enterprise user, all personnel in the company, who share data in cloud servers are end users, and a department in the company that delegates keys inside the company is the ITP.

There are two main attacks under such a circumstance, i.e., external attacks initiated by unauthorized outsiders, and internal attacks initiated by an honest but curious CSP, as well as malicious end users. Since data is stored with the encrypted form in the cloud and communication channels between users and cloud are assumed to be secured under existing security protocols such as SSL, we only consider the internal attacks. The honest but curious CSP will always correctly execute a given protocol, but may try to learn some additional information about the stored data. The malicious end user wants to access the data that he is ineligible to decrypt. We assume that the CSP will not collude with the end users, since the CSP is considered to be honest but curious.

KEY EXCHANGE PROBLEM

Alice and Bob have to share a secret SA own by Alice. Let SA is the password of a file which Bob want to access or it may be encryption key. The question is how Alice can exchange this key to Bob without a trusted third party.

Several key establishment protocols and key management techniques [5] are used in secure communication between the parties. RSA [6] and Diffie-Hellman [7] are the most widely used techniques. Both use public key techniques to allow the exchange of a private encryption key.

Both RSA and Diffie-Hellman are public key encryption algorithms strong enough for commercial purposes. The minimum recommended key length for encryption systems is 128 bits, and both exceed that with their 1,024-bit keys. The nature of the Diffie-Hellman key exchange, however, makes it susceptible to man-in-the-middle (MITM) attacks, since it doesn't authenticate either party involved in the exchange. The MITM maneuver can also create a key pair and spoof messages between the two parties, who think they're both communicating with each other. Mutually authenticating both parties can defeat attempts at MITM attacks.

Diffie-Hellman scheme can be used to set up a shared secret key but the two parties engaged in the protocol cannot set up a specified key as they wish. So this technique cannot be used to agree upon a specific key by the sender and the receiver.

The key exchange can also be done with RSA algorithm but the computational complexity is more and also it needs a trusted third party for the distribution of private and public keys. Techniques are also implemented to exchange secrets by oblivious transfer by M. O. Rabin [8].

The proposed scheme does not use any encryption techniques so it can be used in devices with less computational power. It uses only simple arithmetic operations in the field.

PRELIMINARIES

In this section we give some mathematical techniques from number-theory [3] and state the Quadratic Residuosity (QR) problem [4], which is the principal technique used here. The quadratic residuosity was first used in the cryptographic setting by Goldwasser and Micali [2]. Then it has found many applications in cryptography. It is used by Eyal Kushilevitz and Rafail Ostrovsky for computationally-Private Information Retrieval [1]. We shall use in this work the intractability of the Quadratic Residuosity problem.

Quadratic Residues

Let us consider the quadratic congruence of the form

$$x^2 \equiv y \pmod{p}$$

Where p is an odd prime and $y \not\equiv 0 \pmod{p}$. If the congruence has a solution we say that y is a quadratic residue (QR) \pmod{p} else quadratic non residue (QNR) \pmod{p} .

The basic problem that dominates the theory of quadratic residue is, given p , determine which y are quadratic residues \pmod{p} and which y are quadratic non residues \pmod{p} .

If N is a positive odd integer with prime factorization.

$$N = \prod_{i=1}^r p_i^{a_i}$$

The Jacobi symbol $(y|N)$ is defined for all integers y by the equation

$$(y|N) = \prod_{i=1}^r (y|p_i)^{a_i}$$

Where $(y|p_i)$ is the Legendre symbol.

If the congruence $x^2 \equiv y \pmod{N}$ has a solution then $(y|p_i) = 1$ for each prime p_i and hence $(y|N) = 1$. However the converse is not true since $(y|N)$ can be 1 if an even number of factors is -1. So it will be difficult to distinguish the residues and non residues. The problem is considered hardest when N is a product of two distinct primes of equal length. If the factorization of N is known it can be done easily. The real complexities lie in the prime factorization of large N .

PROPOSED SCHEME

Assumptions

The key is assumed to be a binary string of specified length. The scheme provides better security if the key bits can be represented as square matrix of a particular size.

Let $b_1 b_2 b_3 \dots b_n$ be the bits of the key to be exchanged between the sender and the receiver. K is an $m \times n$ matrix representing the key bits. (make m and n equal for better security). The following figure (Fig.2) shows the organization of 64 bit key.

b1	b2	b3	b4	b5	b6	b7	b8
b9	b10	b11	b12	b13	b14	b15	b16
b17	b18	b19	b20	b21	b22	b23	b24
b25	b26	b27	b28	b29	b30	b31	b32
b33	b34	b35	b36	b37	b38	b39	b40
b41	b42	b43	b44	b45	b46	b47	b48
b49	b50	b51	b52	b53	b54	b55	b56
b57	b58	b59	b60	b61	b62	b63	b64

FIGURE 2: KEY MATRIX K (8X8)

The owner wants to share a secret key of a particular encrypted document with the user. The owner and the user must be authenticated by the CSP to access the resources. The protocol uses a challenge response technique and at the end of the protocol the receiver will be able to reconstruct the key from K .

Key Exchange with Random Challenge Protocol

Now we are ready to define key exchange algorithm with challenge response protocol.

Let N be a natural number define

$$Z_N^* = \{x \mid 1 \leq x < N, \gcd(N, x) = 1\}$$

$$Z_N^+ = \{y \in Z_N^*, (y|N) = 1\}$$

The user selects two random $k/2$ bit prime numbers and the product N is a k bit random number. The user sends N to the owner but keeps its factorization secret.

The user picks uniformly at random n numbers which are not perfect squares, $y_1, y_2, y_3, \dots, y_n \in Z_N^+$, such that y_c is a QNR and y_j , for $j \neq c$, is a QR. Here each number corresponds to one column of the matrix K . He sends these n numbers to the owner (total of $n * k$ bits).

The owner computes for every row r a number $Z_r \in Z_N^*$, as follows: It first computes (in Z_N^*)

$$K_{r,j} = \begin{cases} y_j^2 & \text{if } Kr, j = 0 \\ y_j & \text{if } Kr, j = 1 \end{cases}$$

Where $1 \leq j \leq n$, then it computes

$$Z_r = \prod_{j=1}^r K_{r,j}$$

The observation here is that if $j \neq c$ then $K_{r,j}$ is always a QR, while if $j = c$ then $K_{r,j}$ is QR iff $K_{r,j} = 0$ and it is QNR otherwise. Therefore Z_r is a QR iff $K_{r,j} = 0$

The set of Z_r computed for each row $1 \leq r \leq m$ is sent to the user by the owner (total of $m * k$ bits).

With these Z_r , the user will be able to retrieve the column c of K by computing and checking each of the received Z_r for QR or QNR.

The above procedure from can be repeated for different values of c and obtain the other columns also.

The challenge response protocol ends when the user retrieves K after n rounds.

The selection of QR and QNR can be done efficiently using the following method.

For QR, choose a random number y which is in Z_N^* , square it and find $\text{mod } N$.

For QNR choose a random number y

if $(y|p) = -1$ and $(y|q) = -1$, then y is a QNR.

If $(y|p) = -1$ and $(y|q) = 1$, if for another x if $(x|p) = 1$ and $(x|q) = -1$, then we can combine x and y to efficiently compute a QNR, $(xy|N)$.

If $(y|p) = 1$ and $(y|q) = 1$, neglect the y and try the next random number.

The QNR can be computed efficiently if p (or q) in the form, $4n + 3$. In this case take any random number r and find $p - (r^2 \text{ mod } p)$ which will be a QNR.

Once a QNR is obtained, we can use it to find another QNR and then use it in the next challenge by computing $(r^2 y|N)$, where y is the previously obtained QNR and r is a random number.

Do not choose c sequentially. The value of c must be chosen randomly so that the adversary does not have any idea which column the user is retrieving. Also different N must be chosen for each challenge. The challenge and response will have the same size because K is a square matrix. So the adversary cannot distinguish between challenge and response.

We can also consider the operations in an alternate way by retrieving the rows of key matrix where the key bits organized in each column sequentially.

Communication complexity

The communication in this scheme consists of $m + n + 1 - k$ bit numbers $(N, y_1, y_2, y_3, \dots, y_n, Z_1, Z_2, \dots, Z_m)$.

Pick $m = n = \sqrt{K_n}$ and the communication complexity in one challenge is $(2\sqrt{K_n} + 1) * k$ bits, where K_n is the number of bits in the key. The major factor deciding the security and communication complexity is k , which depends on the size of N . The number of rounds in the protocol is decided by n , which depends on the size of the key to be shared.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

We have described a new technique for exchanging a secret key using random challenge responses. The protocol can be used to exchange a specific key unlike setting up a random key between the sender and the receiver. This scheme can also be used to share different keys with different users in an efficient way. An efficient authentication scheme can also be implemented where unauthorized users can be easily identified without using an encryption technique, which is required in the conventional random challenge response technique.

In the cloud-computing environment, users may access data anytime and anywhere using any device. When a user wants to access data using a thin client with limited bandwidth, CPU, and memory capabilities, we need to develop algorithms with low communication and computational costs. An efficient delegation mechanism and revocation scheme must also be incorporated with this scheme for the key management in the enterprise scenario.

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