Byzantine Fault Tolerance

COS 418: *Distributed Systems*
Lecture 9

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So far: Fail-stop failures

- Traditional state machine replication tolerates **fail-stop failures:**
  - Node crashes
  - Network breaks or partitions
- State machine replication with ***N* = 2*f*+1** replicas can tolerate ***f*** **simultaneous fail-stop failures**
  - **Two algorithms:** Paxos, RAFT

Byzantine faults

- ***Byzantine fault:*** Node/component **fails arbitrarily**
  - Might perform **incorrect computation**
  - Might give **conflicting information** to different parts of the system
  - Might **collude** with other failed nodes
- Why might nodes or components fail arbitrarily?
  - **Software bug** present in code
  - **Hardware failure** occurs
  - **Hack** attack on system

Today: Byzantine fault tolerance

- Can we provide state machine replication for a service **in the presence of Byzantine faults?**
- Such a service is called a **Byzantine Fault Tolerant** (**BFT**) service
- *Why might we care about this level of reliability?*

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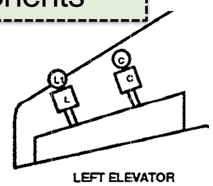
Mini-case-study: Boeing 777 fly-by-wire primary flight control system

- **Triple-redundant, dissimilar** processor hardware:
  1. Intel 80486
  2. Motorola
  3. AMD

- Each
  from

Key techniques:
Hardware and software **diversity**
Voting between components

Simplified **design:**
- Pilot inputs → three processors
- Processors **vote** → **control surface**



Today

1. **Traditional state-machine replication for BFT?**
2. Practical BFT replication algorithm
3. Performance and Discussion

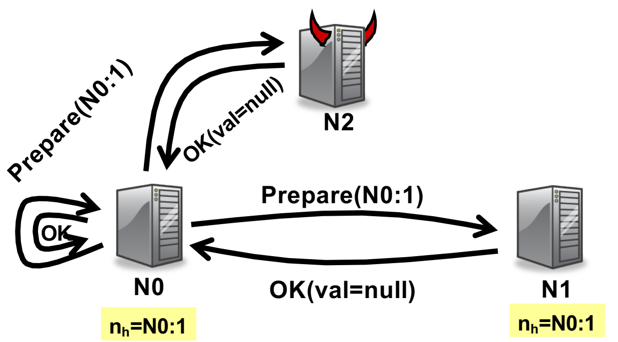
Review: Tolerating one fail-stop failure

- **Traditional state machine replication (Paxos)** requires, *e.g.*, $2f + 1$ = **three** replicas, if $f = 1$
- Operations are totally ordered → correctness
  - A two-phase protocol
- Each operation uses ≥ $f + 1 = 2$ of them
  - **Overlapping** quorums
    - So at **least one replica** "remembers"

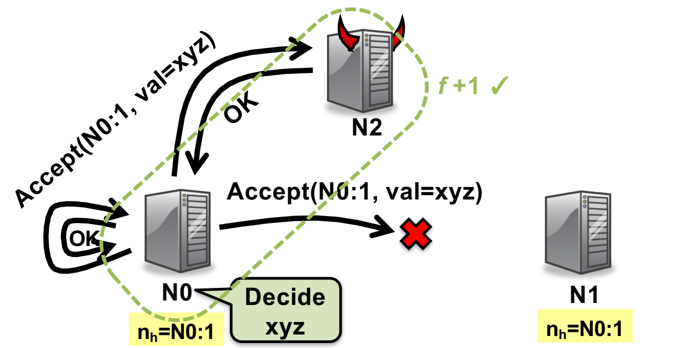
Use Paxos for BFT?

1. **Can't rely on the primary** to assign seqno
   - Could assign same seqno to different requests
2. **Can't use Paxos** for view change
   - Under Byzantine faults, the intersection of two majority ($f + 1$ node) quorums **may be bad node**
   - Bad node tells **different** quorums **different things!**
     - *e.g.* tells N0 accept **val1,** but N1 accept **val2**

Paxos under Byzantine faults (*f* = 1)



Paxos under Byzantine faults (*f* = 1)



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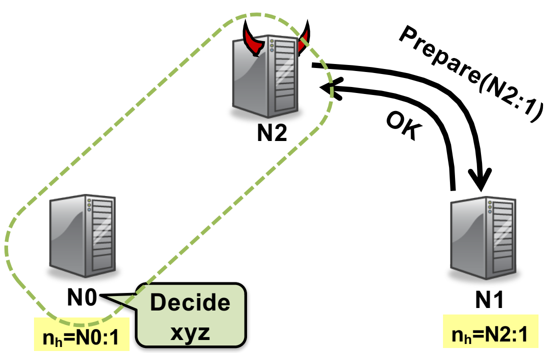

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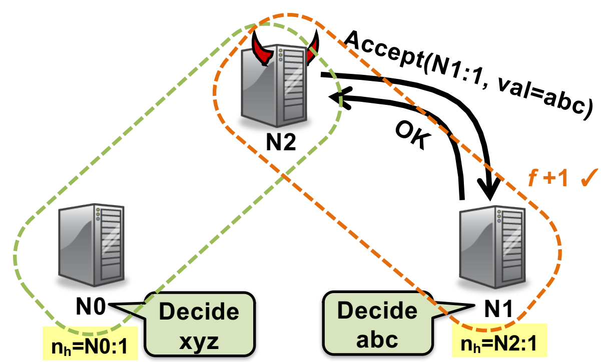

Conflicting decisions!

Back to theoretical fundamentals: Byzantine generals

- Generals camped outside a city, waiting to attack
- Must **agree on common battle plan**
  - Attack or wait **together** → success
  - However, one or more of them may be **traitors** who will try to confuse the others

Using messengers, problem solvable if and only if **more than two-thirds** of the generals are loyal

Put burden on client instead?

- Clients **sign** input data before storing it, then **verify** signatures on data retrieved from service
- **Example:** Store signed file f1="aaa" with server
  - Verify that returned f1 is correctly signed

But a Byzantine node can **replay stale,** signed **data** in its response

Inefficient: Clients have to perform computations and sign data

Today

1. Traditional state-machine replication for BFT?
2. **Practical BFT replication algorithm**
   [Liskov & Castro, 2001]
3. Performance and Discussion

Practical BFT: Overview

- Uses 3f+1 **replicas** to survive f **failures**
  - Shown to be **minimal** **(Lamport)**
- Requires **three phases (not two)**
- Provides **state machine replication**
  - Arbitrary service accessed by operations, *e.g.,*
    - File system ops read and write files and directories
  - **Tolerates** Byzantine-faulty clients

Correctness argument

- Assume
  - Operations are **deterministic**
  - Replicas **start in same state**

- Then if replicas execute the **same requests** in the **same order:**
  - Correct replicas will produce **identical results**

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Non-problem: Client failures

- Clients **can't** cause internal inconsistencies the data in the servers
  - State machine replication property

- Clients **can** write bogus data to the system
  - System should authenticate clients and separate their data just like any other datastore
    - This is a separate problem

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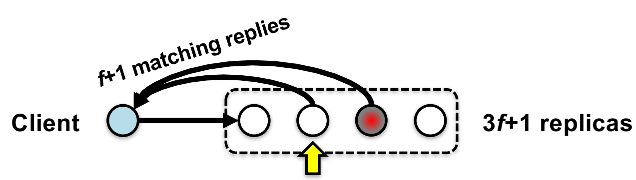
What clients do

1. Send requests to the primary replica

2. Wait for *f*+1 **identical** replies
   - **Note:** The replies may be deceptive
     - *i.e.* replica returns "correct" answer, but locally does otherwise!

- But **≥ one** reply is **actually** from a **non-faulty replica**



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What replicas do

- Carry out a protocol that ensures that
  - Replies from honest replicas are correct

  - Enough replicas process each request to ensure that
    - The **non-faulty** replicas process the **same requests**
    - In the **same order**

- Non-faulty replicas obey the protocol

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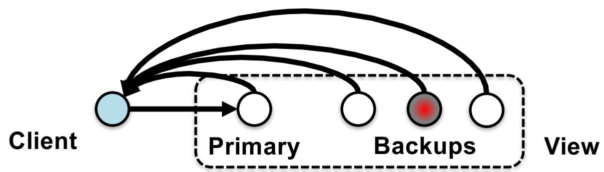
Primary-Backup protocol

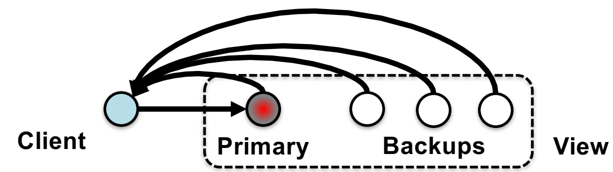
- Primary-Backup protocol: Group runs in a **view**
  - View **number** designates the **primary** replica



- Primary is the node whose id (modulo view #) = 1

Ordering requests

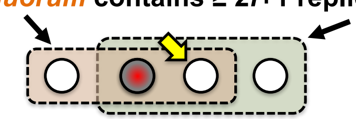
- Primary picks the ordering of requests
  - But the **primary** **might be a liar!**



- Backups ensure primary behaves correctly
  - Check and certify correct ordering
  - Trigger **view changes** to replace faulty primary

Byzantine quorums (*f* = 1)

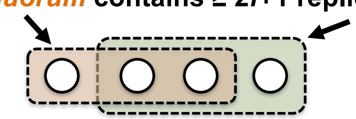
A *Byzantine quorum* contains ≥ 2*f*+1 replicas



- One op's quorum **overlaps** with next op's quorum
  - There are **3*f*+1 replicas, in total**
    - **So overlap is ≥ *f*+1 replicas**
- *f*+1 replicas must contain ≥ **1 non-faulty replica**

Quorum certificates

A *Byzantine quorum* contains ≥ 2*f*+1 replicas

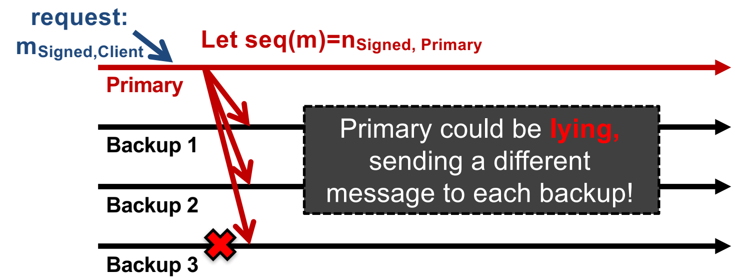


- ***Quorum certificate:*** a collection of 2*f* + 1 signed, **identical** messages from a Byzantine quorum
  - All messages agree on the **same statement**

Keys

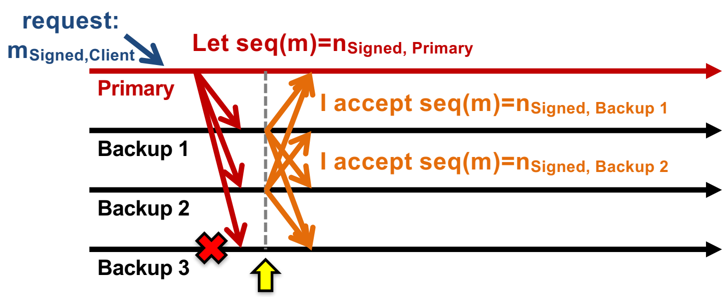
- Each client and replica has a **private-public keypair**
- **Secret keys:** symmetric cryptography
  - Key is known only to the two communicating parties
  - Bootstrapped using the public keys
- **Each client, replica** has the following secret keys:
  - One key per replica for sending messages
  - One key per replica for receiving messages

Ordering requests



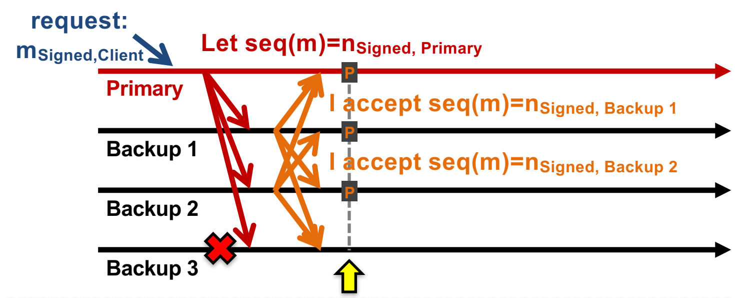
- Primary chooses the request's ***sequence number*** (*n*)
  - Sequence number determines order of execution

Checking the primary's message



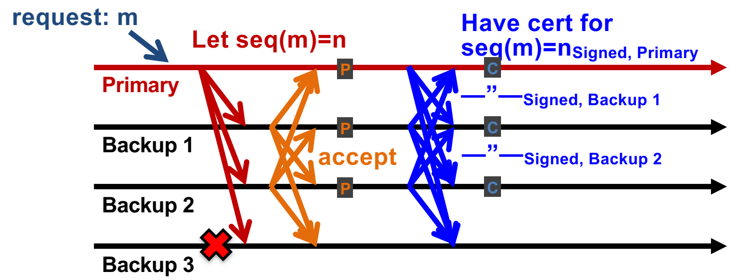
- Backups **locally** verify they've seen **≤ one** client request for sequence number *n*
  - If local check passes, replica broadcasts ***accept*** message
    - Each replica makes this decision **independently**

Collecting a *prepared certificate* (*f* = 1)



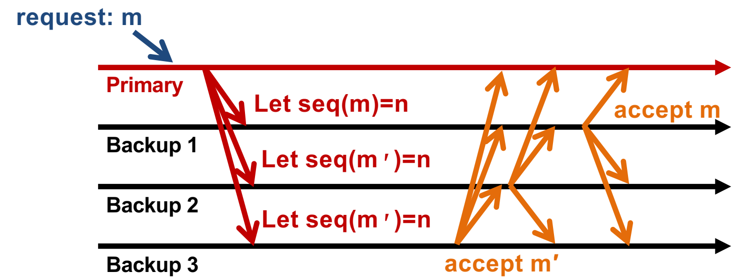
Each **correct** node has a prepared certificate **locally**, but does not **know** whether the **other correct nodes** do too! So, we **can't commit** yet!

Collecting a *committed* certificate (*f* = 1)



Once the request is **committed**, replicas **execute** the operation and send a reply directly back to the client.

Byzantine primary (*f* = 1)

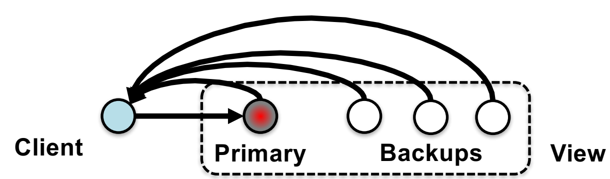


No one has accumulated enough messages to prepare → time for a view change

Byzantine primary

- In general, backups **won't prepare** if primary lies
- **Suppose they did:** two distinct requests **m** and **m′** for the same sequence number n
  - Then prepared quorum certificates (each of size 2*f*+1) would **intersect** at an **honest** replica
  - So that honest replica would have sent an accept message for both m and m′
    - **So m = m′**

View change



- If a replica suspects the primary is faulty, it requests a ***view change***
  - Sends a ***viewchange*** request to all replicas
    - Everyone acks the view change request
- New primary collects a quorum (2*f*+1) of responses
  - Sends a ***new-view*** message with this certificate

Considerations for view change

- Need committed operations to **survive** into next view
  - Client may have gotten answer
- Need to **preserve liveness**
  - If replicas are too fast to do view change, but really primary is okay – then performance problem
  - Or malicious replica tries to subvert the system by proposing a **bogus view change**

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Garbage collection

- Storing all messages and certificates into a **log**
  - Can't let log **grow without bound**
- Protocol to **shrink the log** when it gets too big
  - Discard messages, certificates on commit?
    - No! Need them for view change
  - Replicas have to agree to shrink the log

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Proactive recovery

- What we've done so far: good service provided there are no more than *f* failures **over system lifetime**
  - But cannot **recognize** faulty replicas!
- Therefore **proactive recovery:**
  - ***Recover*** the replica to a **known good state** whether faulty or not
- Correct service provided no more than *f* failures in a small time window – *e.g.,* 10 minutes

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Recovery protocol sketch

- Watchdog timer
- Secure co-processor
  - Stores node's **private** key (of private-public keypair)
- Read-only memory
- Restart node periodically:
  - Saves its state (timed operation)
  - Reboot, reload code from read-only memory
  - Discard all secret keys (prevent impersonation)
  - Establishes new secret keys and state

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   [Liskov & Castro, 2001]
3. **Performance and Discussion**

File system benchmarks

- ***BFS*** filesystem runs atop BFT
  - Four replicas tolerating one Byzantine failure
  - Modified Andrew filesystem benchmark
- What's performance relative to NFS?
  - Compare BFS versus Linux NFSv2 (unsafe!)
    - BFS **15% slower:** claim **can be used in practice**

Practical limitations of BFT

- Protection is achieved only when at most *f* nodes fail
  - Is one node more or less secure than four?
    - Need **independent implementations** of the service
- Needs **more messages, rounds** than conventional state machine replication
- **Does not prevent** many classes of attacks:
  - Turn a machine into a botnet node
  - Steal SSNs from servers

Large impact

- Inspired **much follow-on work** to address its limitations
- The **ideas surrounding Byzantine fault tolerance** have found numerous applications:
  - Boeing 777 and 787 flight control computer systems
  - Digital currency systems

Friday precept:
Big Data and Spark
Guest lecturer: Patrick Wendell
(co-founder, Databricks inc.)
Room: Robertson 016

Monday topic:
Peer-to-Peer Systems and
Distributed Hash Tables

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