Byzantine Fault Tolerance

COS 418: *Distributed Systems*
Lecture 14

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[Selected content adapted from J. Li, B. Liskov, and xkcd]

So far in COS 418: Fail-stop failures

- Traditional state machine replication
  - Tolerates **fail-stop failures**
    - Node ***crashes,*** i.e. **stops responding** to requests
    - Does **not** return responses that **violate protocol…**
- **Result:** State machine replication with $N = 2f + 1$ replicas can tolerate f **simultaneous fail-stop failures**

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?*

Motivation for BFT

- The **ideas surrounding Byzantine fault tolerance** have found numerous applications:
  - Commercial airliner flight control computer systems
  - Digital currency systems
- Some limitations, but…
  - Inspired **much follow-on research** to address these limitations

5

Today

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

6

Review: Tolerating one fail-stop failure

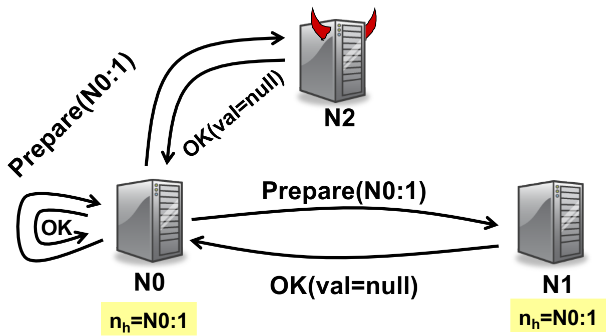
- **Traditional state machine replication (Paxos)** requires, *e.g.*, $2f + 1$ = **three** replicas, if $f = 1$
- Operations are totally ordered → correctness
  - A two-phase protocol
- Each operation uses $\geq f + 1 = 2$ of them
  - **Overlapping** quorums
    - So at **least one replica** "remembers"

7

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)



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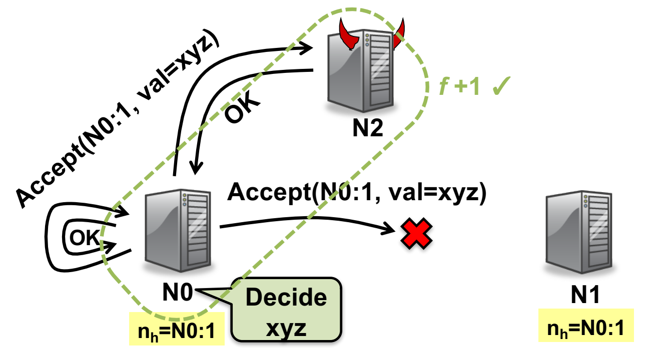

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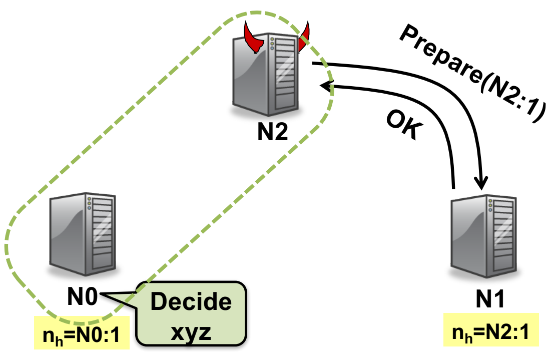
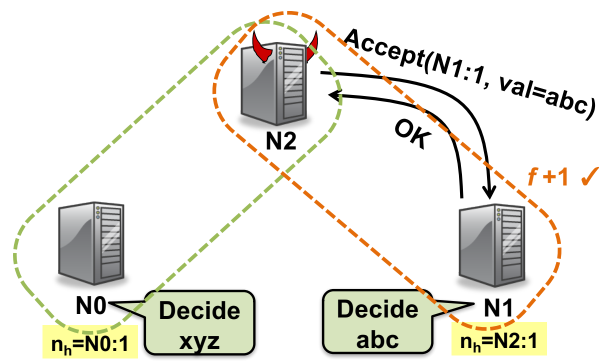


Paxos under Byzantine faults (*f* = 1)



Conflicting decisions!

Theoretical fundamentals: Byzantine Generals

Result: Using messengers, problem **solvable iff > ⅔** 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

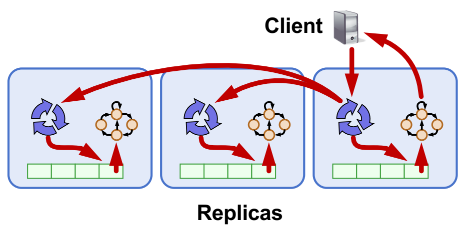
Practical BFT: Overview

- Uses 3*f*+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**
- Assume replicas **start in same state**

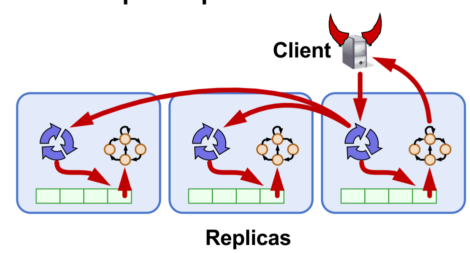
- If replicas execute **same requests** in **same order:**
  - Correct replicas will produce **identical results**



Non-problem: Client failures

- Clients **can't** cause replica inconsistencies

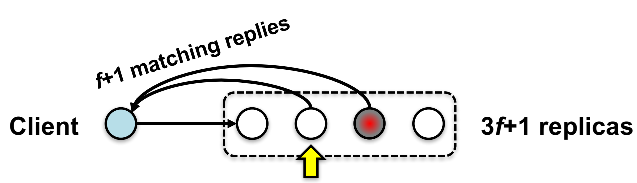
- Clients **can** write bogus data to the system
  - **Sol'n:** Authenticate clients and separate their data
    - This is a **separate problem**



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 **at least one** reply is from a **non-faulty replica**



What replicas do

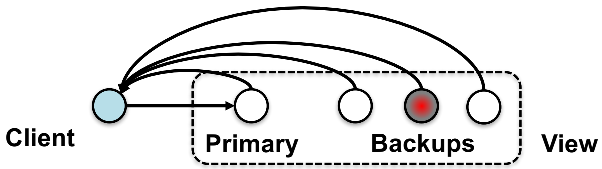
- Carry out a protocol that ensures that
  - Replies from honest replicas are correct

  - 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

Primary-Backup protocol

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

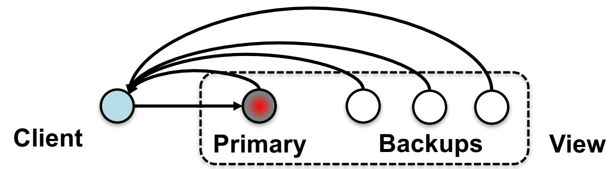


- Primary is the node whose id (modulo view #) = 1

21

Ordering requests

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

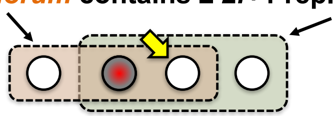


- Backups ensure primary behaves correctly
  - Check and certify correct ordering
  - Trigger **view changes** to replace faulty primary

22

Byzantine quorums ($f = 1$)

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

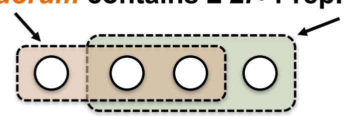


- One op's quorum **overlaps** with next op's quorum
  - There are **3*f*+1 replicas, in total**
    - **So overlap is ≥ *f*+1 replicas**
- *f*+1 replicas must contain ≥ **1 non-faulty replica**

23

Quorum certificates

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



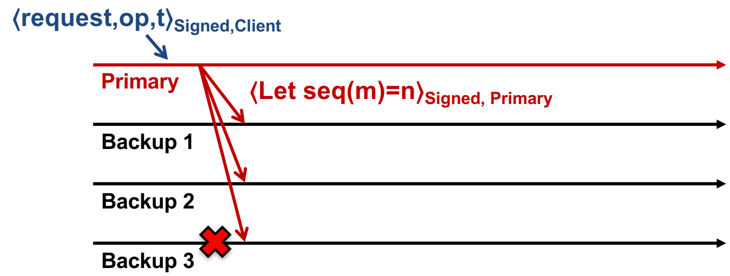
- ***Quorum certificate:*** a collection of 2*f* + 1 signed, **identical** messages from a Byzantine quorum
  - All messages agree on the **same statement**

24

Keys

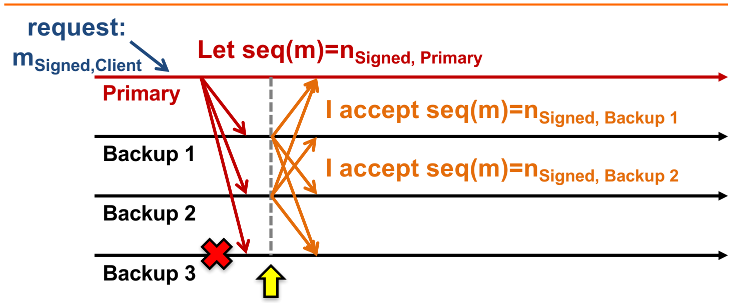
- Each client and replica has a **private-public keypair**
- **Secret keys:** symmetric cryptography
  - Key is known only to the two communicating parties
  - Bootstrapped using the public keys
- **Each client, replica** has the following secret keys:
  - One key per replica for sending messages
  -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

Ordering requests



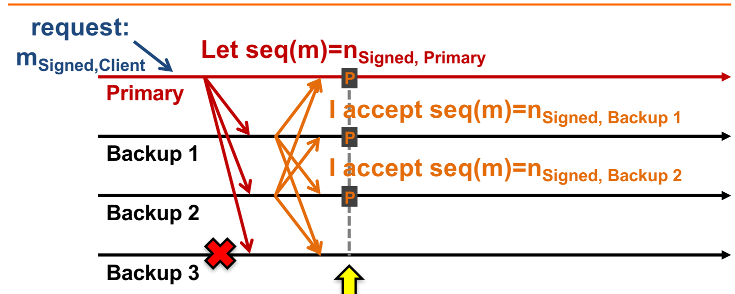
- Client requests operation **op** with ***timestamp*** *t*
- Primary chooses the request's ***sequence number*** (*n*)
  - Sequence number determines order of execution

Checking the primary's message



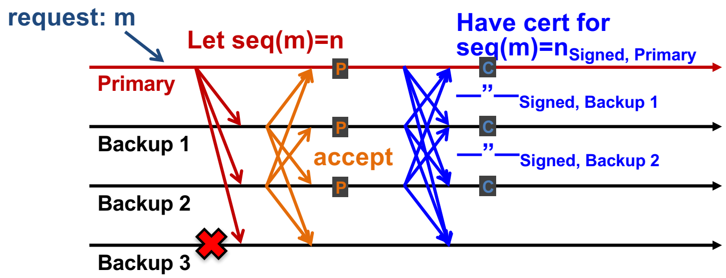
- Backups **locally** verify they've seen **≤ one** client request for sequence number *n*
  - If local check passes, replica broadcasts ***accept*** message
    - Each replica makes this decision **independently**

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



Each **correct** node is prepared **locally,** but does not **know** whether **other correct nodes** are prepared! So, **can't commit** yet!

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



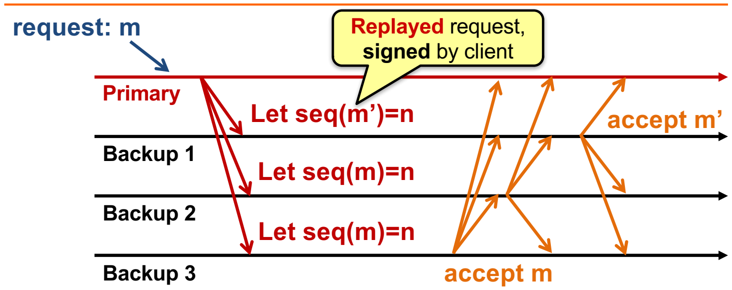
Once the request is **committed**, replicas **execute** the operation and send a reply directly back to the client.

Byzantine primary: replaying old requests

- The client assigns each request a unique, monotonically increasing ***timestamp*** *t*
- Servers track greatest *t* executed for each client *c*, **T(c),** and their corresponding reply
  - On receiving request to execute with timestamp *t*:
    - If t < T(c), skip the request execution
    - If t = T(c), resend the reply but skip execution.
    - If t > T(c), execute request, set T(c) ← t, remember reply

Malicious primary can invoke t = T(c) case but **cannot compromise safety**

Byzantine primary: Splitting replicas (*f* = 1)

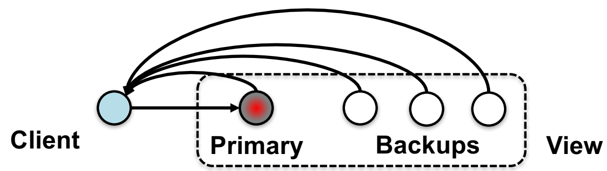


- **Recall:** To **prepare**, need primary message and 2*f* accepts
  - Backup 1: **Won't prepare m'**
  - Backups 2, 3: Will prepare m

Splitting replicas

- In general, backups **won't prepare two different requests with the same seqno** 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' which **can't happen**
    - **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**

34

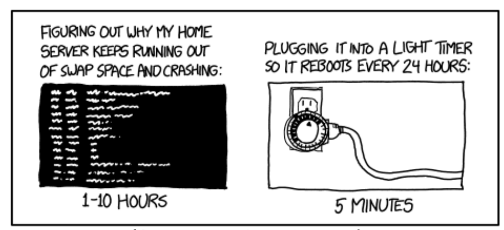
Garbage collection

- 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

35

Proactive recovery (1)

- What we've done so far: correct service provided ≤ ***f*** failures **over the system's lifetime of operation**
  - But we can't **recognize** faulty replicas!

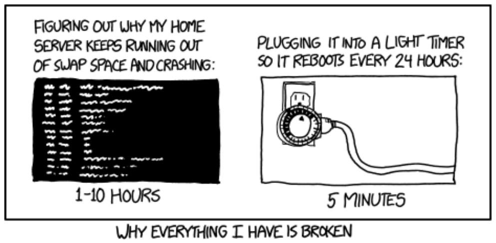


WHY EVERYTHING I HAVE IS BROKEN

36

Proactive recovery (2)

- Therefore **proactive recovery:**
  - ***Recover*** replica to **known good state** whether faulty or not
  - Correct service provided no more than *f* failures in a small time window – *e.g.,* 10 minutes



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

Today

1. Traditional state-machine replication for BFT?

2. Practical BFT replication algorithm
   [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

Wednesday topic:

Strong consistency and CAP Theorem

42