









Breaking Mixed Boolean-Arithmetic Obfuscation in Real-World Applications

Tim Blazytko

 @mr_phrazer
 synthesis.to
 tim@blazytko.to

Nicolò Altamura

 @nicolodev
 nicolo.dev
 seekbytes@protonmail.com

About Us

- Tim Blazytko
 - Chief Scientist & Head of Engineering, co-founder of emproof
 - designs software protections for embedded devices
 - trainer for (de)obfuscation and reverse engineering techniques
- Nicolò Altamura
 - CS master student at University of Verona
 - security engineer at emproof
 - code deobfuscation by night



- ❓ Obfuscated code, MBAs
- ⚡ Attacks on MBAs
- 🔍 State of Binary Analysis Tooling

Prevent **Complicate** reverse engineering attempts.

- intellectual property
- malicious payloads
- Digital Rights Management

MBAs

What does this expression compute?

$$(x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y)$$

What does this expression compute?

$$\begin{aligned}(x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y) \\ = x + y\end{aligned}$$

What does this expression compute?

$$(((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \ll 1)) \vee z) + (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \ll 1)) \wedge z)$$

Mixed Boolean-Arithmetic

What does this expression compute?

$$\begin{aligned} & (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \ll 1)) \vee z) + (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \ll 1)) \wedge z) \\ &= x + y + z \end{aligned}$$

- Boolean identities?
- Arithmetic identities?
- Karnaugh-Veitch maps?

$$A \cdot 0 = 0$$

$$A + B = \overline{\overline{A} \cdot \overline{B}}$$

$$x^2 - y^2 = (x + y)(x - y)$$

		AB			
		00	01	11	10
CD	10	0	0	1	1
	11	0	0	1	1
	01	0	0	0	1
	00	0	1	1	1

Boolean-arithmetic algebra $BA[n]$

$(B^n, \wedge, \vee, \oplus, \neg, \leq, \geq, >, <, \leq^s, \geq^s, >^s, <^s, \neq, =, \gg^s, \gg, \ll, +, -, \cdot)$
is a Boolean-arithmetic algebra $BA[n]$, for $n > 0$, $B = \{0, 1\}$.

$BA[n]$ includes, amongst others, both:

- Boolean algebra $(B^n, \wedge, \vee, \neg)$,
- Integer modular ring $\mathbb{Z}/(2^n)$.

No techniques to simplify
such expressions easily!

Boolean-arithmetic algebra $BA[n]$

$(B^n, \wedge, \vee, \oplus, \neg, \leq, \geq, >, <, \leq^s, \geq^s, >^s, <^s, \neq, =, \gg^s, \gg, \ll, +, -, \cdot)$
is a Boolean-arithmetic algebra $BA[n]$, for $n > 0$, $B = \{0, 1\}$.

Commonly found in gaming, advanced DRM solutions and malware

$BA[n]$ includes, amongst others, both:

- Boolean algebra $(B^n, \wedge, \vee, \neg)$,
- Integer modular ring $\mathbb{Z}/(2^n)$.

No techniques to simplify
such expressions easily!

Obfuscation Primitive

Hiding Computations

```
uint8_t hidden_computation(uint8_t x, uint8_t y){  
    int k1 = (x & (((x & y) + (x & y)) + (x ^ y)));  
    int k2 = ((x ^ y) + (x & y) << 1) - y;  
    int k3 = (x ^ (((x & y) + (x & y)) + (x ^ y)));  
  
    return k1 + k2 + k3;  
}
```

Hiding Computations

```
uint8_t hidden_computation(uint8_t x, uint8_t y){  
    int k1 = (x & (((x & y) + (x & y)) + (x ^ y)));  
    int k2 = ((x ^ y) + (x & y) << 1) - y;  
    int k3 = 2 * x - y + (x ^ y));  
    return k1 + k2 + k3;  
}
```

Hiding Constants

```
uint8_t constant(uint8_t x, uint8_t y) {  
    uint8_t k1 = 202 + 231 * (y | x) + 244 * (x | y) + 7 * (y & y);  
    uint8_t k2 = 180 * y + 85 * (y ^ y);  
    uint8_t k3 = 155 * (x | x) + 139 * (x ^ x) + 206 * (x & y);  
    uint8_t k4 = 174 * (y | y) + 65 * (x & x);  
    uint8_t k5 = 115 * x + 67 * ~x + 93 * ~y;  
    uint8_t k6 = 35 * (y ^ x) + 246 * (x ^ y) + 63 * (y & x);  
  
    return k1 + k2 + k3 + k4 + k5 + k6;  
}
```

Hiding Constants

```
uint8_t constant(uint8_t x, uint8_t y) {  
    uint8_t k1 = 202 + 231 * (y | x) + 244 * (x | y) + 7 * (y & y);  
    uint8_t k2 = 180 * y + 85 * (y ^ y);  
    uint8_t k3 = 155 * (x | x) + 139 * (x ^ x) + 206 * (x & y);  
    uint8_t k4 = 174 * (y | y) + 65 * (x & x);  
    uint8_t k5 = 115 * x + 67 * 42 * 93 * ~y;  
    uint8_t k6 = 35 * (y ^ x) + 246 * (x ^ y) + 63 * (y & x);  
  
    return k1 + k2 + k3 + k4 + k5 + k6;  
}
```


Opaque Predicates

```
uint8_t opaque_predicate(uint8_t x, uint8_t y) {  
    uint8_t k1 = 96 + 159 * (y ^ x) + 160 * y + 194 * (y | x) + 96 * ~x;  
    uint8_t k2 = 193 + 64 * ~y + 65 * (y & y) + 130 * x + 129 * ~x;  
  
    if (k1 != k2) {  
        // dead code  
        return x - y;  
    }  
  
    return x + y;  
}
```

Opaque Predicates

```
uint8_t opaque_predicate(uint8_t x, uint8_t y) {  
    uint8_t k1 = 96 + 159 * (y ^ x) + 160 * y + 194 * (y | x) + 96 * ~x;  
    uint8_t k2 = 193 + 64 * ~y + 65 * (y & y) + 130 * x + 129 * ~x;  
  
    if (k1 != k2) {  
        // dead code  
        return x - y;  
    }  
  
    return x + y;  
}
```

Opaque Predicates

```
uint8_t opaque_predicate(uint8_t x, uint8_t y) {  
    uint8_t k1 = 96 + 159 * (y ^ x) + 160 * y + 194 * (y | x) + 96 * ~x;  
    uint8_t k2 = 193 + 64 * ~y + 65 * (y & y) + 130 * x + 129 * ~x;  
  
    if (k1 != k2) {  
        // dead code  
        return x;  
    }  
  
    return x + y;  
}
```

$$x + y \neq x + y$$

MBA Construction

$$\sum_{i \in I} a_i \cdot e_i(x_1, \dots, x_t)$$

$$\sum_{i \in I} a_i \cdot e_i(x_1, \dots, x_t)$$

- $(x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y)$
- $((((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \ll 1)) \vee z) + (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \ll 1)) \wedge z)$

$$\sum_{i \in I} a_i \cdot e_i(x_1, \dots, x_t)$$

No multiplication between variables

$$\sum_{i \in I} a_i \left(\prod_{j \in J_i} e_{i,j}(x_1, \dots, x_t) \right)$$

$$\sum_{i \in I} a_i \left(\prod_{j \in J_i} e_{i,j}(x_1, \dots, x_t) \right)$$

- $85 \cdot (x \vee y \wedge z)^3 + (xy \wedge x) + (xz)^2$
- $xy + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y) + 3 \cdot (x \wedge \neg y)(x \vee y) - 5$

$$\sum_{i \in I} a_i \left(\prod_{j \in I_i} e_{i,j}(x_1, \dots, x_t) \right)$$

Multiplication between variables

- $85 \cdot (x \vee y \wedge z)^3 + (xy \wedge x) + (xz)^2$
- $xy + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y) + 3 \cdot (x \wedge \neg y)(x \vee y) - 5$

$$x - y \cdot (x + y)$$

Rewriting rules:

$$1) \quad x + y \rightarrow (x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y)$$

$$2) \quad x \oplus y \rightarrow (x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)$$

...

$$47) \quad x \wedge y \rightarrow (\neg x \vee y) - \neg x$$

$$x - y \cdot (x + y)$$

Rewriting rules:

$$1) \quad x + y \rightarrow (x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y)$$

$$2) \quad x \oplus y \rightarrow (x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)$$

...

$$47) \quad x \wedge y \rightarrow (\neg x \vee y) - \neg x$$

$$x - y \cdot (x + y)$$

Rewriting rules:

1) $x + y \rightarrow (x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y)$

2) $x \oplus y \rightarrow (x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)$

...

47) $x \wedge y \rightarrow (\neg x \vee y) - \neg x$

Recursive MBA Rewriting

$$x - y \cdot (x + y)$$

Rewriting rules:

1) $x + y \rightarrow (x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y)$

2) $x \oplus y \rightarrow (x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)$

...

47) $x \wedge y \rightarrow (\neg x \vee y) - \neg x$


$$x - y \cdot ((x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y))$$

$$x - y \cdot (x + y)$$



$$x - y \cdot ((x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y))$$

Rewriting rules:

1) $x + y \rightarrow (x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y)$

2) $x \oplus y \rightarrow (x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)$

...

47) $x \wedge y \rightarrow (\neg x \vee y) - \neg x$

$$x - y \cdot (x + y)$$

Rewriting rules:

$$1) \quad x + y \rightarrow (x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y)$$

$$2) \quad x \oplus y \rightarrow (x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)$$

...

$$47) \quad x \wedge y \rightarrow (\neg x \vee y) - \neg x$$

$$x - y \cdot ((x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y))$$

final expression

Traditional Approach

$$x - y \cdot (x + y)$$

Rewriting rules:

$$1) \quad x + y \rightarrow (x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y)$$

$$2) \quad x \oplus y \rightarrow (x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)$$

...

$$(47) \quad x \wedge y \rightarrow (\neg x \vee y) - \neg x$$

$$x - y \cdot ((x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y))$$

final expression

Recursive MBA Rewriting

$$x - y \cdot (x + y)$$

Rewriting rules:

$$1) \quad x + y \rightarrow (x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y)$$

$$2) \quad x \oplus y \rightarrow (x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)$$

...

$$(847,000) \quad x \wedge y \rightarrow (\neg x \vee y) - \neg x$$

$$x - y \cdot ((x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y))$$

final expression

$$x - y \cdot (x + y)$$

Rewriting rules:

$$1) \quad x + y \rightarrow (x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y)$$

$$2) \quad x \oplus y \rightarrow (x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)$$

Lookup table w/ **all** identities

$$x - y \cdot ((x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y))$$

final expression

$$x - y \cdot (x + y)$$

Rewriting rules:

$$1) \quad x + y \rightarrow (x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y)$$

$$2) \quad x \oplus y \rightarrow (x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)$$

...

$$847,000) \quad x \wedge y \rightarrow (\neg x \vee y) - \neg x$$

$$x - y \cdot ((x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y))$$

~~final expression~~

$$x - y \cdot (x + y)$$

Rewriting rules:

$$1) \quad x + y \rightarrow (x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y)$$

$$2) \quad x \oplus y \rightarrow (x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)$$


...

$$847,000) \quad x \wedge y \rightarrow (\neg x \vee y) - \neg x$$

$$x - y \cdot ((x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y))$$

~~final expression~~

Recursive Approach


$$x - y \cdot (x + y)$$
$$x - y \cdot ((x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y))$$

Rewriting rules:

1) $x + y \rightarrow (x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y)$

2) $x \oplus y \rightarrow (x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)$

...

847,000) $x \wedge y \rightarrow (\neg x \vee y) - \neg x$

Recursive Approach

$$x - y \cdot ((x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y))$$

Rewriting rules:

$$1) \quad x + y \rightarrow (x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y)$$

$$2) \quad x \oplus y \rightarrow (x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)$$

...

$$847,000) \quad x \wedge y \rightarrow (\neg x \vee y) - \neg x$$

$$x - y \cdot ((x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y))$$

Recursive Approach

$$x - y \cdot ((x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y))$$

Rewriting rules:

1) $x + y \rightarrow (x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y)$

2) $x \oplus y \rightarrow (x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)$

...

847,000) $x \wedge y \rightarrow (\neg x \vee y) - \neg x$

$$x - y \cdot (((x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y))$$

Recursive Approach

$$x - y \cdot ((x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y))$$

Rewriting rules:

1) $x + y \rightarrow (x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y)$

2) $x \oplus y \rightarrow (x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)$

...

847,000) $x \wedge y \rightarrow (\neg x \vee y) - \neg x$


$$x - y \cdot (((x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y))$$

Recursive Approach

$$x - y \cdot ((x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y))$$



$$x - y \cdot (((x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y))$$

Rewriting rules:

1) $x + y \rightarrow (x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y)$

2) $x \oplus y \rightarrow (x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)$

...

847,000) $x \wedge y \rightarrow (\neg x \vee y) - \neg x$

Recursive Approach

$$x - y \cdot (((x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y))$$

Rewriting rules:

$$1) \quad x + y \rightarrow (x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y)$$

$$2) \quad x \oplus y \rightarrow (x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)$$

...

$$847,000) \quad x \wedge y \rightarrow (\neg x \vee y) - \neg x$$

$$x - y \cdot (((x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y))$$

Recursive Approach

Recursive MBA Rewriting

$$x - y \cdot (((x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y))$$

Rewriting rules:

1) $x + y \rightarrow (x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y)$

2) $x \oplus y \rightarrow (x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)$

...

847,000) $x \wedge y \rightarrow (\neg x \vee y) - \neg x$

$$x - y \cdot (((x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y))$$

Recursive MBA Rewriting

$$x - y \cdot (((x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y))$$

Rewriting rules:

1) $x + y \rightarrow (x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y)$

2) $x \oplus y \rightarrow (x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)$

...

847,000) $x \wedge y \rightarrow (\neg x \vee y) - \neg x$


$$x - y \cdot (((x \vee y) - ((\neg x \vee y) - \neg x)) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y))$$

Recursive MBA Rewriting

$$x - y \cdot (((x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y))$$

Rewriting rules:

$$1) \quad x + y \rightarrow (x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y)$$

$$2) \quad x \oplus y \rightarrow (x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)$$

...

$$847,000) \quad x \wedge y \rightarrow (\neg x \vee y) - \neg x$$

$$x - y \cdot (((x \vee y) - ((\neg x \vee y) - \neg x)) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y))$$

final expression

$$x - y \cdot (((x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y))$$

Rewriting rules:

$$1) \quad x + y \rightarrow (x \oplus y) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y)$$

$$2) \quad x \oplus y \rightarrow (x \vee y) - (x \wedge y)$$

Recursive Rewriting

$$(\neg x \vee y) - \neg x$$

$$x - y \cdot (((x \vee y) - ((\neg x \vee y) - \neg x)) + 2 \cdot (x \wedge y))$$

Insertion of Identities

$$x - y \cdot (x + y)$$

Rewrite as:

$$expr \equiv h^{-1}(h(expr))$$

Insertion of Identities

$$x - y \cdot (x + y)$$

Rewrite as:

$$expr \equiv h^{-1}(h(expr))$$

Insertion of Identities

$$x - y \cdot (x + y)$$

Rewrite as:

$$expr \equiv h^{-1}(h(expr))$$

Insertion of Identities

$$x - y \cdot (x + y)$$

Rewrite as:

$$expr \equiv h^{-1}(h(expr))$$

Invertible function on 1 byte:

$$h : a \mapsto 39a + 23$$

$$h^{-1} : a \mapsto 151a + 111$$

Insertion of Identities

$$x - y \cdot (x + y)$$

Rewrite as:

$$expr \equiv h^{-1}(h(expr))$$

Invertible function on **1 byte**:

$$h : a \mapsto 39a + 23$$

$$h^{-1} : a \mapsto 151a + 111$$

$$\implies expr \equiv h^{-1}(h(expr)) \bmod 2^8$$

Insertion of Identities

$$x - y \cdot (x + y)$$


Rewrite as:

$$expr \equiv h^{-1}(h(expr))$$

Invertible function on 1 byte:

$$h : a \mapsto 39a + 23$$

$$h^{-1} : a \mapsto 151a + 111$$

$$\implies expr \equiv h^{-1}(h(expr)) \pmod{2^8}$$

Insertion of Identities

$$x - y \cdot (x + y)$$

$$x - y \cdot (h^{-1}(h(x + y)))$$

Rewrite as:

$$expr \equiv h^{-1}(h(expr))$$

Invertible function on 1 byte:


$$h : a \mapsto 39a + 23$$

$$h^{-1} : a \mapsto 151a + 111$$

$$\implies expr \equiv h^{-1}(h(expr)) \pmod{2^8}$$

Insertion of Identities

$$x - y \cdot (x + y)$$

$$x - y \cdot (h^{-1}(h(x + y)))$$


Rewrite as:

$$expr \equiv h^{-1}(h(expr))$$

Invertible function on 1 byte:

$$h : a \mapsto 39a + 23$$

$$h^{-1} : a \mapsto 151a + 111$$

$$\implies expr \equiv h^{-1}(h(expr)) \pmod{2^8}$$

Insertion of Identities

$$x - y \cdot (x + y)$$

$$x - y \cdot (h^{-1}(h(x + y)))$$

$$x - y \cdot (h^{-1}(39 \cdot (x + y) + 23))$$


Rewrite as:

$$expr \equiv h^{-1}(h(expr))$$

Invertible function on 1 byte:

$$h : a \mapsto 39a + 23$$

$$h^{-1} : a \mapsto 151a + 111$$

$$\implies expr \equiv h^{-1}(h(expr)) \pmod{2^8}$$

Insertion of Identities

$$x - y \cdot (x + y)$$

$$x - y \cdot (h^{-1}(h(x + y)))$$

$$x - y \cdot (h^{-1}(39 \cdot (x + y) + 23)) \longrightarrow$$

Rewrite as:

$$expr \equiv h^{-1}(h(expr))$$

Invertible function on 1 byte:

$$h : a \mapsto 39a + 23$$

$$h^{-1} : a \mapsto 151a + 111$$

$$\implies expr \equiv h^{-1}(h(expr)) \pmod{2^8}$$

Insertion of Identities

$$x - y \cdot (x + y)$$

$$x - y \cdot (h^{-1}(h(x + y)))$$

$$x - y \cdot (h^{-1}(39 \cdot (x + y) + 23))$$

$$x - y \cdot (151 \cdot (39 \cdot (x + y) + 23) + 111)$$

Rewrite as:

$$expr \equiv h^{-1}(h(expr))$$

Invertible function on 1 byte:

$$h : a \mapsto 39a + 23$$

$$h^{-1} : a \mapsto 151a + 111$$

$$\implies expr \equiv h^{-1}(h(expr)) \pmod{2^8}$$

Insertion of Identities

$$x - y \cdot (x + y)$$



equal

$$x - y \cdot (151 \cdot (39 \cdot (x + y) + 23) + 111)$$

Rewrite as:

$$expr \equiv h^{-1}(h(expr))$$

Invertible function on 1 byte:

$$h : a \mapsto 39a + 23$$

$$h^{-1} : a \mapsto 151a + 111$$

$$\implies expr \equiv h^{-1}(h(expr)) \pmod{2^8}$$

Binary Permutation Polynomial Inversion and Application to Obfuscation Techniques

Lucas Barthelemy^{abd}
lbarthelemy@quarkslab.com

Ninon Eyrolles^a
neyrolles@quarkslab.com

Guenaël Renault^{bce}
guenael.renault@upmc.fr

Raphaël Roblin^{bd}
raph.robilin@gmail.com

^aQuarkslab, Paris, France

^bSorbonne Universités, UPMC Univ Paris 06, F-75005, Paris, France

^cCNRS, UMR 7606, LIP6, F-75005, Paris, France

^dUPMC Computer Science Master Department, SFPN Course

^eInria, Paris Center, PolSys Project

How to attack MBAs?

Algebraic Attacks

Efficient Deobfuscation of Linear Mixed Boolean-Arithmetic Expressions

Benjamin Reichenwallner & Peter Meerwald-Stadler
Denuvo GmbH
Salzburg, Austria

<https://github.com/DenuvoSoftwareSolutions/SiMBA>

Efficient Deobfuscation of Linear Mixed Boolean-Arithmetic
Expressions

Powerful attack without binary analysis tooling

Denuvo GmbH
Salzburg, Austria

<https://github.com/DenuvoSoftwareSolutions/SiMBA>

Simplification of General Mixed Boolean-Arithmetic Expressions: GAMBA

Benjamin Reichenwallner & Peter Meerwald-Stadler
Denuvo GmbH
Salzburg, Austria

<https://arxiv.org/pdf/2305.06763.pdf>

Simplification of General Mixed Boolean-Arithmetic
Expressions: GAMBA

Limited success on unseen MBA patterns

Denuvo GmbH
Salzburg, Austria

<https://arxiv.org/pdf/2305.06763.pdf>

Code Analysis Attacks

Inspecting Compiler Optimizations on Mixed Boolean Arithmetic Obfuscation

Rachael Little
University of New Hampshire
rachael.little@unh.edu

Dongpeng Xu
University of New Hampshire
dongpeng.xu@unh.edu

<https://www.ndss-symposium.org/wp-content/uploads/bar2025-final7.pdf>

Inspecting Compiler Optimizations on Mixed

~~Deepen Arithmetic Obfuscation~~

Limited simplification capabilities

Rachael Little

University of New Hampshire
rachael.little@unh.edu

Dongpeng Xu

University of New Hampshire
dongpeng.xu@unh.edu

<https://www.ndss-symposium.org/wp-content/uploads/bar2025-final7.pdf>

Symbolic Execution

```
int mixed_boolean(int A, int B, int C) {
    int result;

    result = (((1438524315 + (((1438524315 + C) + 1438524315 * ((2956783114 - -1478456685 * C) |
(-1478456685 * (1668620215 - A) - 2956783115)))) + A) - 1553572265)) + 1438524315 * ((2956783114 -
-1478456685 * (((1438524315 + C) + 1438524315 * ((2956783114 - -1478456685 * C) | (-1478456685 *
(1668620215 - A) - 2956783115)))) + A) - 1553572265)) | (-1478456685 * (1668620215 - B) -
2956783115))) - ((1438524315 + (1668620215 - (((1438524315 + C) + 1438524315 * ((2956783114 -
-1478456685 * C) | (-1478456685 * (1668620215 - A) - 2956783115)))) + A) - 1553572265))) +
1438524315 * ((2956783114 - -1478456685 * (1668620215 - (((1438524315 + C) + 1438524315 *
((2956783114 - -1478456685 * C) | (-1478456685 * (1668620215 - A) - 2956783115)))) + A) -
1553572265))) | (-1478456685 * B - 2956783115)))) + 1553572265;

    return -1478456685 * result - 2956783115;
}
```

Symbolic Execution

[illegible]

Symbolic Execution

[illegible]

Useful only in combination with other attacks

[illegible]

Synthesis-based Attacks

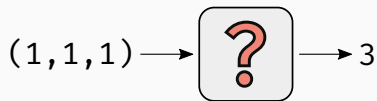
We use f as a black-box:

$$f(x, y, z) := (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \cdot 2)) \vee z) + (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \cdot 2)) \wedge z)$$

Syntia & Xyntia: Stochastic Program Synthesis

We use f as a black-box:

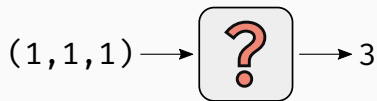
$$f(x, y, z) := (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \cdot 2)) \vee z) + (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \cdot 2)) \wedge z)$$



Syntia & Xyntia: Stochastic Program Synthesis

We use f as a black-box:

$$f(x, y, z) := (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \cdot 2)) \vee z) + (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \cdot 2)) \wedge z)$$

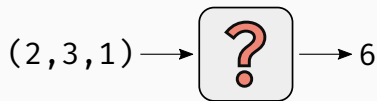


$$(1, 1, 1) \rightarrow 3$$

Syntia & Xyntia: Stochastic Program Synthesis

We use f as a black-box:

$$f(x, y, z) := (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \cdot 2)) \vee z) + (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \cdot 2)) \wedge z)$$

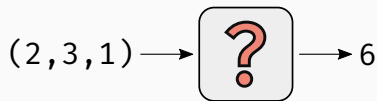


$$(1, 1, 1) \rightarrow 3$$

Syntia & Xyntia: Stochastic Program Synthesis

We use f as a black-box:

$$f(x, y, z) := (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \cdot 2)) \vee z) + (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \cdot 2)) \wedge z)$$



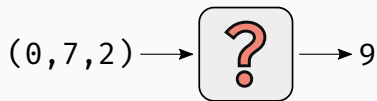
$$(1, 1, 1) \rightarrow 3$$

$$(2, 3, 1) \rightarrow 6$$

Syntia & Xyntia: Stochastic Program Synthesis

We use f as a black-box:

$$f(x, y, z) := (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \cdot 2)) \vee z) + (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \cdot 2)) \wedge z)$$



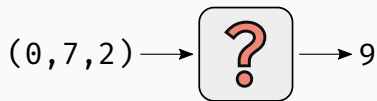
$$(1, 1, 1) \rightarrow 3$$

$$(2, 3, 1) \rightarrow 6$$

Syntia & Xyntia: Stochastic Program Synthesis

We use f as a black-box:

$$f(x, y, z) := (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \cdot 2)) \vee z) + (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \cdot 2)) \wedge z)$$



$$(1, 1, 1) \rightarrow 3$$

$$(2, 3, 1) \rightarrow 6$$

$$(0, 7, 2) \rightarrow 9$$

Syntia & Xyntia: Stochastic Program Synthesis

We use f as a black-box:

$$f(x, y, z) := (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \cdot 2)) \vee z) + (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \cdot 2)) \wedge z)$$

$$(1, 1, 1) \rightarrow 3$$

$$(2, 3, 1) \rightarrow 6$$

$$(0, 7, 2) \rightarrow 9$$

We **learn** a function h that has the same I/O behavior.

Syntia & Xyntia: Stochastic Program Synthesis

We use f as a black-box:

$$f(x, y, z) := (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \cdot 2)) \vee z) + (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \cdot 2)) \wedge z)$$

$$h(x, y, z) := x + y + z \rightarrow 3$$

$(2, 3, 1) \rightarrow 6$
 $(0, 7, 2) \rightarrow 9$

We **learn** a function h that has the same I/O behavior.

We use f as a black-box:

$$f(x, y, z) := (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \cdot 2)) \vee z) + (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \cdot 2)) \wedge z)$$

Successful on semantically simple expressions

$$(2, 3, 1) \rightarrow 6$$

$$(0, 7, 2) \rightarrow 9$$

We **learn** a function h that has the same I/O behavior.

$$((x \oplus y) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge y))) + ((x \oplus z) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge z)))$$

$$((x \oplus y) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge y))) + ((x \oplus z) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge z)))$$

QSynthesis: Simplification via Precomputed Lookup Tables

$$((x \oplus y) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge y))) + ((x \oplus z) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge z)))$$

$$(1, 1, 1) \rightarrow 3$$

QSynthesis: Simplification via Precomputed Lookup Tables

$$((x \oplus y) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge y))) + ((x \oplus z) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge z)))$$

$$(1, 1, 1) \rightarrow 3$$

$$(2, 3, 1) \rightarrow 6$$

QSynthesis: Simplification via Precomputed Lookup Tables

$$((x \oplus y) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge y))) + ((x \oplus z) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge z)))$$

$$(1, 1, 1) \rightarrow 3$$

$$(2, 3, 1) \rightarrow 6$$

$$(0, 7, 2) \rightarrow 9$$

QSynthesis: Simplification via Precomputed Lookup Tables

$$((x \oplus y) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge y))) + ((x \oplus z) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge z)))$$

$$(1, 1, 1) \rightarrow 3$$

$$(2, 3, 1) \rightarrow 6$$

$$(0, 7, 2) \rightarrow 9$$

not in database

QSynthesis: Simplification via Precomputed Lookup Tables

$$((x \oplus y) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge y))) + ((x \oplus z) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge z)))$$

QSynthesis: Simplification via Precomputed Lookup Tables

$$((x \oplus y) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge y))) + ((x \oplus z) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge z)))$$

$$(1, 1, 1) \rightarrow 2$$

QSynthesis: Simplification via Precomputed Lookup Tables

$$((x \oplus y) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge y))) + ((x \oplus z) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge z)))$$

$$(1, 1, 1) \rightarrow 2$$

$$(2, 3, 1) \rightarrow 5$$

QSynthesis: Simplification via Precomputed Lookup Tables

$$((x \oplus y) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge y))) + ((x \oplus z) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge z)))$$

$$(1, 1, 1) \rightarrow 2$$

$$(2, 3, 1) \rightarrow 5$$

$$(0, 7, 2) \rightarrow 7$$

QSynthesis: Simplification via Precomputed Lookup Tables

$$((x \oplus y) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge y))) + ((x \oplus z) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge z)))$$

$$(1, 1, 1) \rightarrow 2$$

$$(2, 3, 1) \rightarrow 5$$

$$(0, 7, 2) \rightarrow 7$$

$$r_0 : x + y$$

QSynthesis: Simplification via Precomputed Lookup Tables

$$r_0 + ((x \oplus z) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge z)))$$

$$(1, 1, 1) \rightarrow 2$$

$$(2, 3, 1) \rightarrow 5$$

$$(0, 7, 2) \rightarrow 7$$

$$r_0 : x + y$$

QSynthesis: Simplification via Precomputed Lookup Tables

$$r_0 + ((x \oplus z) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge z)))$$

$$r_0 : x + y$$

QSynthesis: Simplification via Precomputed Lookup Tables

$$r_0 + ((x \oplus z) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge z)))$$

$$(1, 1, 1) \rightarrow 2$$

$$r_0 : x + y$$

QSynthesis: Simplification via Precomputed Lookup Tables

$$r_0 + ((x \oplus z) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge z)))$$

$$(1, 1, 1) \rightarrow 2$$

$$(2, 3, 1) \rightarrow 3$$

$$r_0 : x + y$$

QSynthesis: Simplification via Precomputed Lookup Tables

$$r_0 + ((x \oplus z) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge z)))$$

$$(1, 1, 1) \rightarrow 2$$

$$(2, 3, 1) \rightarrow 3$$

$$(0, 7, 2) \rightarrow 2$$

$$r_0 : x + y$$

QSynthesis: Simplification via Precomputed Lookup Tables

$$r_0 + ((x \oplus z) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge z)))$$

$$(1, 1, 1) \rightarrow 2$$

$$(2, 3, 1) \rightarrow 3$$

$$(0, 7, 2) \rightarrow 2$$

$$r_0 : x + y$$

$$r_1 : x + z$$

QSynthesis: Simplification via Precomputed Lookup Tables

$$r_0 + r_1$$

$$(1, 1, 1) \rightarrow 2$$

$$(2, 3, 1) \rightarrow 3$$

$$(0, 7, 2) \rightarrow 2$$

$$r_0 : x + y$$

$$r_1 : x + z$$

QSynthesis: Simplification via Precomputed Lookup Tables

$$r_0 + r_1$$

$$r_0 : x + y$$

$$r_1 : x + z$$

QSynthesis: Simplification via Precomputed Lookup Tables

$$r_0 + r_1$$

$$(1, 1, 1) \rightarrow 2$$

$$r_0 : x + y$$

$$r_1 : x + z$$

QSynthesis: Simplification via Precomputed Lookup Tables

$$r_0 + r_1$$

$$(1, 1, 1) \rightarrow 2$$

$$(2, 3, 1) \rightarrow 5$$

$$r_0 : x + y$$

$$r_1 : x + z$$

QSynthesis: Simplification via Precomputed Lookup Tables

$$r_0 + r_1$$

$$(1, 1, 1) \rightarrow 2$$

$$(2, 3, 1) \rightarrow 5$$

$$(0, 7, 2) \rightarrow 7$$

$$r_0 : x + y$$

$$r_1 : x + z$$

QSynthesis: Simplification via Precomputed Lookup Tables

$$r_0 + r_1$$

$$(1, 1, 1) \rightarrow 2$$

$$(2, 3, 1) \rightarrow 5$$

$$(0, 7, 2) \rightarrow 7$$

$$r_0 : x + y$$

$$r_1 : x + z$$

$$r_2 : r_0 + r_1$$

QSynthesis: Simplification via Precomputed Lookup Tables

r_2

$$r_0 : x + y$$

$$r_1 : x + z$$

$$r_2 : r_0 + r_1$$

QSynthesis: Simplification via Precomputed Lookup Tables

r_2

$$r_0 : x + y$$

$$r_1 : x + z$$

$$r_2 : r_0 + r_1$$

QSynthesis: Simplification via Precomputed Lookup Tables

$$((x \oplus y) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge y))) + ((x \oplus z) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge z)))$$

$$r_0 : x + y$$

$$r_1 : x + z$$

$$r_2 : r_0 + r_1$$

QSynthesis: Simplification via Precomputed Lookup Tables

$$((x \oplus y) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge y))) + ((x \oplus z) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge z)))$$

$$r_0 : x + y$$

$$r_1 : x + z$$

$$r_2 : r_0 + r_1$$

$$r_2$$

QSynthesis: Simplification via Precomputed Lookup Tables

$$((x \oplus y) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge y))) + ((x \oplus z) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge z)))$$

$$r_0 : x + y$$

$$r_1 : x + z$$

$$r_2 : r_0 + r_1$$

$$r_2 \rightarrow r_0 + r_1$$

QSynthesis: Simplification via Precomputed Lookup Tables

$$((x \oplus y) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge y))) + ((x \oplus z) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge z)))$$

$$r_0 : x + y$$

$$r_1 : x + z$$

$$r_2 : r_0 + r_1$$

$$r_2 \rightarrow r_0 + r_1 \rightarrow (x + y) + (x + z)$$

$$((x \oplus y) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge y))) + ((x \oplus z) + (2 \cdot (x \wedge z)))$$

Most flexible and powerful attack

$$r_1 : x + z$$

$$r_2 : r_0 + r_1$$

$$r_2 \rightarrow r_0 + r_1 \rightarrow (x + y) + (x + z)$$

Dealing with MBAs in Binaries

- extraction of MBAs (symbolic execution, decompiler, ...)

- extraction of MBAs (symbolic execution, decompiler, ...)
- selection of meaningful MBA boundaries:

$x \oplus y \oplus y$ vs. $x \oplus y$

- **extraction of MBAs** (symbolic execution, decompiler, ...)

- **selection of meaningful** MBA boundaries:

$x \oplus y \oplus y$ vs. $x \oplus y$

- type casts

`rdi[0:32] + rsi[0:32]`

- **extraction of MBAs** (symbolic execution, decompiler, ...)
- **selection of meaningful** MBA boundaries:

$x \oplus y \oplus y$ vs. $x \oplus y$

- type casts

`rdi[0:32] + rsi[0:32]`

- memory access

`@64[rax + 0x20] + rbx`

- extraction of MBAs (symbolic execution, decompiler, ...)
- selection of meaningful MBA boundaries:

$x \oplus v \oplus v$ vs $x \oplus v$

Challenges can only be partially solved

- type casts $rdi[0:32] + rsi[0:32]$
- memory access $@64[rax + 0x20] + rbx$

msynth

Author: Tim Blazytko and Moritz Schloegel

msynth is a code deobfuscation framework to simplify Mixed Boolean-Arithmetic (MBA) expressions. Given a pre-computed simplification oracle, it walks over a complex expression represented as an abstract syntax tree (AST) and tries to simplify subtrees based on oracle lookups. Alternatively, it tries to simplify expressions via stochastic program synthesis.

msynth is built on top of [Miasm](#) and inspired by the papers

- ["QSynth: A Program Synthesis based Approach for Binary Code Deobfuscation"](#) by Robin David, Luigi Coniglio and Mariano Ceccato (NDSS, BAR 2020),
- ["Syntia: Synthesizing the Semantics of Obfuscated Code"](#) by Tim Blazytko, Moritz Contag, Cornelius Aschermann and Thorsten Holz (USENIX Security 2017) and
- ["Search-Based Local Blackbox Deobfuscation: Understand, Improve and Mitigate"](#) by Grégoire Menguy, Sébastien Bardin, Richard Bonichon and Cauim de Souza de Lima (CCS 2021).

It can be used in combination with Miasm's symbolic execution engine to simplify complex expressions in obfuscated code or as a standalone tool to play around with MBA simplification.

```
original: {(((((((RSI[0:32] ^ 0xFFFFFFFF) & RDX[0:32]) + RSI[0:32]) ^ 0xFFFFFFFF) & RDX[0:32]) + RSI[0:32]) ^ 0xFFFFFFFF) & RDX[0:32]}
simplified: {(-RDX[0:32] + ((RDI[0:32] + RDX[0:32] + RSI[0:32]) << 0x1)) * 0x2 0 32, 0x0 32}
```

<https://github.com/mrphrazer/msynth>

- inspired by QSynthesis
- synthesis-based simplification via precomputed lookup tables
- based on Miasm's intermediate representation
- MBAs can be extracted via symbolic execution

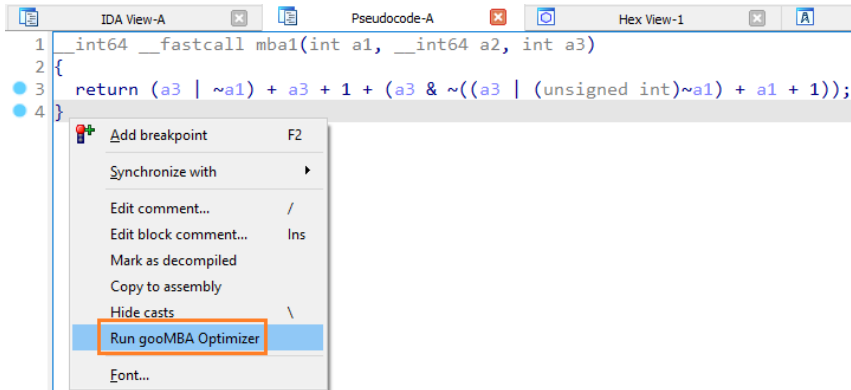
- inspired by QSynthesis
- synthesis-based simplification via precomputed lookup tables

. Powerful framework, requires scripting

- MBAs can be extracted via symbolic execution

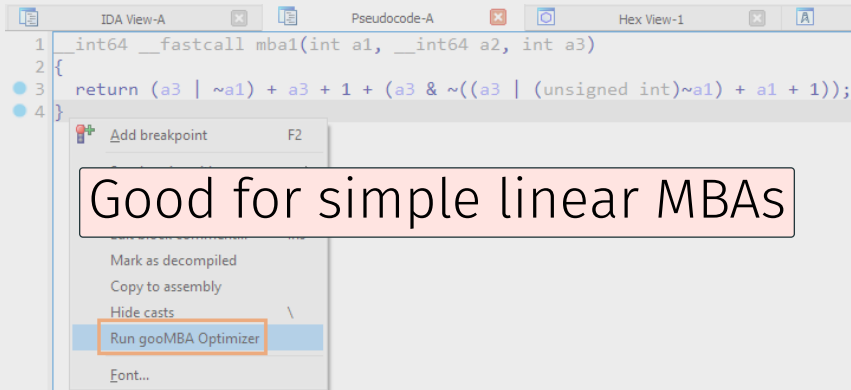
Goomba

Hex-Rays Decompiler Plugin



<https://github.com/HexRaysSA/goomba>

Hex-Rays Decompiler Plugin



<https://github.com/HexRaysSA/goomba>

Tool Shortcomings

Existing tools for dealing with MBAs on the binary level:

- are usable only via manual scripting (msynth)
- are only stable for simple linear MBAs (Goomba)
- only implement a subset of promising techniques

Existing tools for dealing with MBAs on the binary level:

- are usable only via manual scripting (msynth)
- are only stable for simple linear MBAs (Goomba)
- only implement a subset of promising techniques

There's a lot of room for improvement!



Combine Best of Both Worlds!

1. Take statements already recovered by RE tools.
2. Feed them into dedicated MBA solvers.
3. Profit!

Simplification of Decompiler Output

$a := x \oplus y$

$b := x \wedge y$

$b := b \ll 1$

$c := a + b$

$d := c \vee z$

$b := c \wedge z$

$a := d + b$

$a := x \oplus y$

$b := x \wedge y$

$b := b \ll 1$

$c := a + b$

$d := c \vee z$

Static Single Assignment

$a := a + b$

Simplification of Decompiler Output

$a := x \oplus y$

$b := x \wedge y$

$b := b \ll 1$

$c := a + b$

$d := c \vee z$

$b := c \wedge z$

$a := d + b$

Simplification of Decompiler Output

$a_1 := x \oplus y$

$b_1 := x \wedge y$

$b_2 := b_1 \ll 1$

$c_1 := a_1 + b_2$

$d_1 := c_1 \vee z$

$b_3 := c_1 \wedge z$

$a_2 := d_1 + b_3$

$a_1 := x \oplus y$

$b_1 := x \wedge y$

$b_2 := b_1 \ll 1$

$c_1 := a_1 + b_2$

$d_1 := c_1 \vee z$

Backward Slicing

$u_2 := u_1 + v_3$

Simplification of Decompiler Output

$$a_1 := x \oplus y$$

$$b_1 := x \wedge y$$

$$b_2 := b_1 \ll 1$$

$$c_1 := a_1 + b_2$$

$$d_1 := c_1 \vee z$$

$$b_3 := c_1 \wedge z$$

$$a_2 := d_1 + b_3$$

$$a_2$$

Simplification of Decompiler Output

$$a_1 := x \oplus y$$

$$b_1 := x \wedge y$$

$$b_2 := b_1 \ll 1$$

$$c_1 := a_1 + b_2$$

$$d_1 := c_1 \vee z$$

$$b_3 := c_1 \wedge z$$

$$a_2 := d_1 + b_3$$

$$d_1 + b_3$$

Simplification of Decompiler Output

$$a_1 := x \oplus y$$

$$b_1 := x \wedge y$$

$$b_2 := b_1 \ll 1$$

$$c_1 := a_1 + b_2$$

$$d_1 := c_1 \vee z$$

$$b_3 := c_1 \wedge z$$

$$a_2 := d_1 + b_3$$

$$d_1 + b_3$$

Simplification of Decompiler Output

$$a_1 := x \oplus y$$

$$b_1 := x \wedge y$$

$$b_2 := b_1 \ll 1$$

$$c_1 := a_1 + b_2$$

$$d_1 := c_1 \vee z$$

$$b_3 := c_1 \wedge z$$

$$a_2 := d_1 + b_3$$

$$(c_1 \vee z) + (c_1 \wedge z)$$

Simplification of Decompiler Output

$$a_1 := x \oplus y$$

$$b_1 := x \wedge y$$

$$b_2 := b_1 \ll 1$$

$$c_1 := a_1 + b_2$$

$$d_1 := c_1 \vee z$$

$$b_3 := c_1 \wedge z$$

$$a_2 := d_1 + b_3$$

$$(c_1 \vee z) + (c_1 \wedge z)$$

Simplification of Decompiler Output

$$a_1 := x \oplus y$$

$$b_1 := x \wedge y$$

$$b_2 := b_1 \ll 1$$

$$c_1 := a_1 + b_2$$

$$d_1 := c_1 \vee z$$

$$b_3 := c_1 \wedge z$$

$$a_2 := d_1 + b_3$$

$$((a_1 + b_2) \vee z) + ((a_1 + b_2) \wedge z)$$

Simplification of Decompiler Output

$$a_1 := x \oplus y$$

$$b_1 := x \wedge y$$

$$b_2 := b_1 \ll 1$$

$$c_1 := a_1 + b_2$$

$$d_1 := c_1 \vee z$$

$$b_3 := c_1 \wedge z$$

$$a_2 := d_1 + b_3$$

$$((a_1 + b_2) \vee z) + ((a_1 + b_2) \wedge z)$$

Simplification of Decompiler Output

$$a_1 := x \oplus y$$

$$b_1 := x \wedge y$$

$$b_2 := b_1 \ll 1$$

$$c_1 := a_1 + b_2$$

$$d_1 := c_1 \vee z$$

$$b_3 := c_1 \wedge z$$

$$a_2 := d_1 + b_3$$

$$(((x \oplus y) + (b_1 \ll 1)) \vee z) + (((x \oplus y) + (b_1 \ll 1)) \wedge z)$$

Simplification of Decompiler Output

$$a_1 := x \oplus y$$

$$b_1 := x \wedge y$$

$$b_2 := b_1 \ll 1$$

$$c_1 := a_1 + b_2$$

$$d_1 := c_1 \vee z$$

$$b_3 := c_1 \wedge z$$

$$a_2 := d_1 + b_3$$

$$(((x \oplus y) + (b_1 \ll 1)) \vee z) + (((x \oplus y) + (b_1 \ll 1)) \wedge z)$$

Simplification of Decompiler Output

$$a_1 := x \oplus y$$

$$b_1 := x \wedge y$$

$$b_2 := b_1 \ll 1$$

$$c_1 := a_1 + b_2$$

$$d_1 := c_1 \vee z$$

$$b_3 := c_1 \wedge z$$

$$a_2 := d_1 + b_3$$

$$(((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \ll 1)) \vee z) + (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \ll 1)) \wedge z)$$

Simplification of Decompiler Output

$$a_1 := x \oplus y$$

$$b_1 := x \wedge y$$

$$b_2 := b_1 \ll 1$$

$$c_1 := a_1 + b_2$$

$$d_1 := c_1 \vee z$$

$$b_3 := c_1 \wedge z$$

$$a_2 := d_1 + b_3$$

$$(((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \ll 1)) \vee z) + (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \ll 1)) \wedge z)$$

Simplification of Decompiler Output

$$a_1 := x \oplus y$$

$$b_1 := x \wedge y$$

$$b_2 := b_1 \ll 1$$

$$c_1 := a_1 + b_2$$

$$d_1 := c_1 \vee z$$

Simplification

$$a_2 := a_1 + b_3$$

$$(((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \ll 1)) \vee z) + (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \ll 1)) \wedge z)$$

Simplification of Decompiler Output

$$a_1 := x \oplus y$$

$$b_1 := x \wedge y$$

$$b_2 := b_1 \ll 1$$

$$c_1 := a_1 + b_2$$

$$d_1 := c_1 \vee z$$

$$b_3 := c_1 \wedge z$$

$$a_2 := d_1 + b_3$$

$$(((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \ll 1)) \vee z) + (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \ll 1)) \wedge z)$$

Simplification of Decompiler Output

$$a_1 := x \oplus y$$

$$b_1 := x \wedge y$$

$$b_2 := b_1 \ll 1$$

$$c_1 := a_1 + b_2$$

$$d_1 := c_1 \vee z$$

$$b_3 := c_1 \wedge z$$

$$a_2 := d_1 + b_3$$

$$x + y + z$$

Good news:
Some decompilers already support
backward slicing!

⇒ We retrieve the unfolded expression

But how to simplify?

We already have msynth..

..but it relies on Miasm's intermediate representation!

\Rightarrow IL-to-IL translation

Traverse the AST tree of the SSA statement
and translate every node to a Miasm
construct

$$(((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \ll 1)) \vee z) + (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \ll 1)) \wedge z)$$

Binary Ninja HLIL	Miasm IL
HLIL_VAR	ExprId
HLIL_CONST	ExprInt
HLIL_XOR, HLIL_OR, HLIL_SHL, ...	ExprOp

$$(((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \ll 1)) \vee z) + (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \ll 1)) \wedge z)$$

Binary Ninja HLIL	Miasm IL
HLIL_VAR	ExprId
HLIL_CONST	ExprInt
HLIL_XOR, HLIL_OR, HLIL_SHL, ...	ExprOp

$$(((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \ll 1)) \vee z) + (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \ll 1)) \wedge z)$$

Binary Ninja HLIL	Miasm IL
HLIL_VAR	ExprId
HLIL_CONST	ExprInt
HLIL_XOR, HLIL_OR, HLIL_SHL, ...	ExprOp

$$(((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \ll 1)) \vee z) + (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \ll 1)) \wedge z)$$

Binary Ninja HLIL	Miasm IL
HLIL_VAR	ExprId
HLIL_CONST	ExprInt
HLIL_XOR, HLIL_OR, HLIL_SHL, ...	ExprOp

$$(((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \ll 1)) \vee z) + (((x \oplus y) + ((x \wedge y) \ll 1)) \wedge z)$$

```
ExprOp("+", ExprOp("+", ExprOp("+", ExprVar("z", 64), ...), ..., ), ...)
```

HLIL_VAR ExprId

HLIL_CONST ExprInt

HLIL_XOR, HLIL_OR, HLIL_SHL, ... ExprOp

Showcase

mba5:

```
0 @ 004011b1 int32_t rcx = arg2
1 @ 004011bc int32_t rbp = 0xfffffffffe - arg2
2 @ 004011be int32_t r13 = arg2 + 1
3 @ 004011c4 int32_t rdx_1 = rbp | r13
4 @ 004011ca int32_t r11_1 = arg2 - rdx_1
5 @ 004011d0 int32_t r10_1 = arg2 & 1
6 @ 004011d9 arg2.b = r10_1 == 0
7 @ 004011dd uint32_t rsi = zx.d(arg2.b)
8 @ 004011e4 int32_t r14_1 = r13 | rsi
9 @ 004011e7 int32_t r8 = rcx + arg1
10 @ 004011f8 int32_t r12_1 = not.d(r8)
11 @ 00401203 int32_t rdx_5 = (rdx_1 - rcx - 1) | r11_1 | 1
12 @ 0040120b int32_t rdx_7 = rcx & 0xfffffffffe
13 @ 00401211 int32_t var_34 = rcx
14 @ 00401215 int32_t r9_1 = rcx | rdx_7
15 @ 0040121b int32_t r11_3 = (r11_1 + arg1) & rdx_5
16 @ 0040122a int32_t rdi_2 = (0xfffffffffe - r8) & (r8 + 1) & rcx
17 @ 00401266 int32_t rdx_16 = (not.d((((rdx_7 + 2 - rsi) | (arg1 - 2)) & r13) + arg1) | (0xfffffffffe - r8))
17 @ 00401266 & rcx) - ((r8 - ((r14_1 - 1 - ((not.d(rsi) & rbp) | r14_1 | 2)) | rbp)) & rdx_5)
18 @ 004012a5 int32_t rbx_8 = (((r9_1 - rcx) ^ ((rdi_2 - r11_3) & r12_1)) - 1)
18 @ 004012a5 | ((((((not.d((0xfffffffffe - r8) ^ (r8 + 1)) & rcx) - r11_3) & r12_1) ^ (r9_1 - rcx)) - 1) & 1)
19 @ 004012ef int32_t rdi_5 = ((rdi_2 -
19 @ 004012ef ((r8 - (((((rcx * 2 + 1) & not.d(rcx) & ((not.d(rcx) * 2) | rcx)) ^ rcx) + 1) | rbp)) & rdx_5))
19 @ 004012ef & r12_1) ^ (r9_1 + 1 - ((not.d(r10_1) | rcx) ^ rbp))
20 @ 00401300 return zx.q(arg3 - 1 - (((rdx_16 & r12_1) ^ (rcx - 1 - r9_1)) + rbx_8 + 1) & rdi_5))
```

```
20 @ 00401300 // zeroExt_64(arg1 + arg2 + arg3)
20 @ 00401300 return zx.q(arg3 - 1 - (((rdx_16 & r12_1) ^ (rcx - 1 - r9_1)) + rbx_8 + 1) & rdi_5))
```

Tools

Obfuscation Analysis (v1.1)

Authors: Tim Blazytko & Nicolò Altamura

Analyze and simplify obfuscated code

Description:

Obfuscation Analysis is a Binary Ninja plugin that takes the pain out of working with heavily protected binaries. It bundles a handful of focused helpers that let you

- simplify Mixed-Boolean Arithmetic (MBA) expressions in one click (based on [msynth](#))
- locate and scrub functions with broken disassembly

`https://github.com/mrphrazer/obfuscation_analysis`

- architecture agnostic Binary Ninja plugin
- simplifies complex MBA expressions
- uses msynth in the background for simplification

Real-World Examples

```
22 @ 180011737 r9_9.b = rcx_27 == 0
23 @ 18001173b int32_t r10_3
24 @ 18001173b r10_3.b = rcx_27 != 0
25 @ 180011743 rcx_27.b = r8 s> 9
26 @ 18001174a bool r11 = r8 s< 0xa
27 @ 18001174e char rax_30 = rcx_27.b
28 @ 180011750 char r8_1 = r10_3.b
29 @ 180011753 char rdx_14 = rcx_27.b
30 @ 180011755 rcx_27.b |= r10_3.b
31 @ 180011758 r10_3.b |= r11
32 @ 18001175b rax_30 |= r9_9.b
33 @ 180011768 rax_30 = ((rax_30 | r10_3.b) ^ 1) | (r10_3.b ^ rax_30)
34 @ 180011770 rdx_14 = (rdx_14 & r9_9.b) | (r8_1 & r11)
35 @ 180011776 rcx_27.b ^= 1
36 @ 180011779 rcx_27.b |= r11 ^ r9_9.b
37 @ 18001177c rcx_27.b ^= 1
38 @ 180011781 char rbx_1 = rdx_14 & rcx_27.b
39 @ 180011783 rcx_27.b ^= rdx_14
40 @ 180011785 rcx_27.b |= rbx_1
41 @ 180011789 char rdx_15 = rax_30 ^ rcx_27.b
42 @ 18001178f rax_30 = ((rax_30 ^ 1) | rcx_27.b) ^ 1
43 @ 180011791 rdx_15 ^= 1
44 @ 1800117a1 if ((rax_30 & rdx_15 & 1) == 0 && ((rax_30 ^ rdx_15) & 1) == 0)
```

```
22 @ 180011737 r9_9.b = rcx_27 == 0
23 @ 18001173b int32_t r10_3
24 @ 18001173b r10_3.b = rcx_27 != 0
25 @ 180011743 rcx_27.b = r8 s> 9
26 @ 18001174a bool r11 = r8 s< 0xa
27 @ 18001174e char rax_30 = rcx_27.b
28 @ 180011750 char r8_1 = r10_3.b
29 @ 180011753 char rdx_14 = rcx_27.b
30 @ 180011755 rcx_27.b |= r10_3.b
31 @ 180011758 r10_3.b |= r11
```

MBA-based Opaque Predicate

```
32 @ 180011760
33 @ 180011760
34 @ 180011760
35 @ 180011776 rcx_27.b ^= 1
36 @ 180011779 rcx_27.b |= r11 ^ r9_9.b
37 @ 18001177c rcx_27.b ^= 1
38 @ 180011781 char rbx_1 = rdx_14 & rcx_27.b
39 @ 180011783 rcx_27.b ^= rdx_14
40 @ 180011785 rcx_27.b |= rbx_1
41 @ 180011789 char rdx_15 = rax_30 ^ rcx_27.b
42 @ 18001178f rax_30 = ((rax_30 ^ 1) | rcx_27.b) ^ 1
43 @ 180011791 rdx_15 ^= 1
44 @ 1800117a1 if ((rax_30 & rdx_15 & 1) == 0 && ((rax_30 ^ rdx_15) & 1) == 0)
```

```
@ 1800117a1 // 0x0
@ 1800117a1 if ((rax_30 & rdx_15 & 1) == 0 && ((rax_30 ^ rdx_15) & 1) == 0)
```

00882cc0	int32_t var_108 = 0
00882cca	int32_t var_104 = 0
00882cd4	int32_t var_1c = 0x978cbc69
00882d55	int32_t var_f8_3 =
00882d55	((arg2 & 0xa8835f11) 0x108392a4) + ((0x532880ee not.d(arg2)) & 0xea004d11)
00882d55	
00882d71	while (true)
00882d71	void var_498
00882d71	void var_488
00882d71	int64_t var_538
00882d71	void var_528
00882d71	void var_508
00882d71	void var_428
00882d71	void var_3e8
00882d71	void var_318
00882d71	void var_2e8
00882d71	void var_218
00882d71	void var_1f8
00882d71	void var_188
00882d71	void var_168
00882d71	void* var_18
00882d71	int32_t var_c
00882d71	void* rax_11
00882d71	
00882d71	if (var_f8_3 + 0x57c206b u<= 0x66)
00882d9d	switch (var_f8_3)
00882f3c	case 0xfa83df95
00882f3c	var_f8_3 = 0xfa83dfc0
00882f46	continue
00882f52	case 0xfa83df96
00882f52	var_18 = &var_528
00882f5d	sub_868771(&var_508)

```

00882cc0      int32_t var_108 = 0
00882cca      int32_t var_104 = 0
00882cd4      int32_t var_1c = 0x978cbc69
00882d55      int32_t var_f8_3 =
00882d55          ((arg2 & 0xa8835f11) | 0x108392a4) + ((0x532880ee | not.d(arg2)) & 0xea004d11)
00882d55
00882d71      while (true)
00882d71          void var_498
00882d71          void var_488
00882d71          int64_t var_538
00882d71          void var_528
00882d71          void var_508
00882d71          void var_428
00882d71          void var_3e8

```

Control-Flow Flattening in a DRM System

```

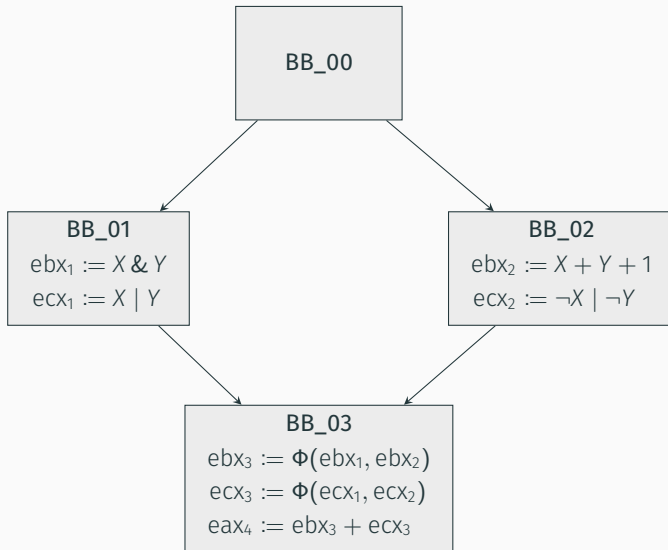
00882d71      void var_188
00882d71      void var_168
00882d71      void* var_18
00882d71      int32_t var_c
00882d71      void* rax_11
00882d71
00882d71      if (var_f8_3 + 0x57c206b u<= 0x66)
00882d9d          switch (var_f8_3)
00882f3c              case 0xfa83df95
00882f3c                  var_f8_3 = 0xfa83dfc0
00882f46                  continue
00882f52              case 0xfa83df96
00882f52                  var_18 = &var_528
00882f5d                  sub_868771(&var_508)

```

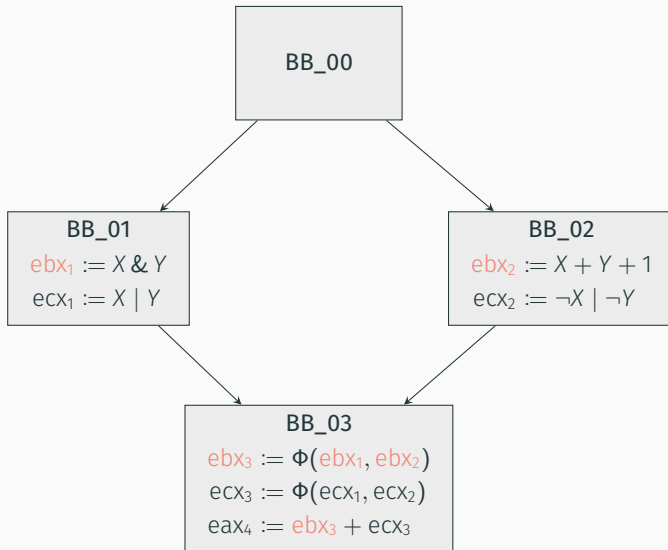
```
3 @ 00882d55 // 0xFA83DFB5
3 @ 00882d55 int32_t var_f8_3 = ((arg2 & 0xa8835f11) | 0x108392a4) + ((0x532880ee | not.d(arg2)) & 0xea004d11)
```

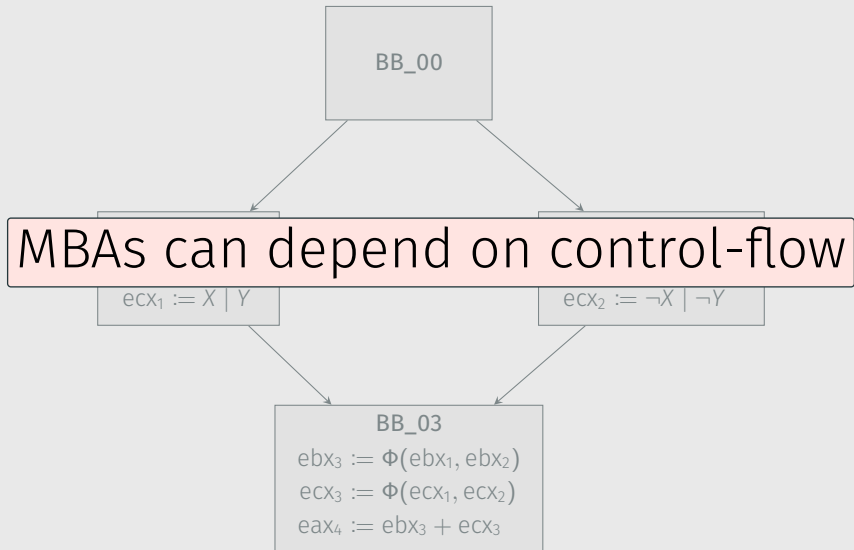
Can we do better?

Backward slicing limited to basic block level



Backward slicing limited to basic block level





Unsupported translated nodes from Binary Ninja IL to Miasm

- floating point

Unsupported translated nodes from Binary Ninja IL to Miasm

- floating point
- intrinsic operations

Unsupported translated nodes from Binary Ninja IL to Miasm

- floating point
- intrinsic operations
- control flow

Future Trends

- smooth integration into tooling

- smooth integration into tooling
- missing **stable** ways to **rewrite the IL**

- smooth integration into tooling
- missing **stable** ways to **rewrite the IL**
- **interprocedural constructs** cannot be easily analyzed

- smooth integration into tooling
- missing **stable** ways to **rewrite the IL**
- **interprocedural constructs** cannot be easily analyzed
- recent **attacks not adapted** to binary tooling

- smooth integration into tooling
- missing **stable** ways to **rewrite the IL**
- **interprocedural constructs** cannot be easily analyzed
- recent **attacks not adapted** to binary tooling

Binary tools have to catch up!

- research on algebraic attacks continues
- **synergie of algebraic and synthesis-based attacks**
amplifies simplification efficiency

SECRET CLUB

Improving MBA Deobfuscation using Equality Saturation



fvrmatteo, mrphrazer

Aug 8, 2022

<https://secret.club/2022/08/08/eqsat-oracle-synthesis.html>

Conclusion

1. MBAs are an important **obfuscation primitive**.
2. Various attacks exist, **combined attacks** are promising.
3. Binary deobfuscation solutions exist, but are no panacea.
4. Many **attacks** still need **porting** into binary analysis tools.

Summary

- don't be afraid of MBAs
- help us to support better binary analysis tooling

https://github.com/mrphrazer/obfuscation_analysis

Tim Blazytko



@mr_phrazer



<https://synthesis.to>

Nicolò Altamura



@nicolodev



<https://nicolo.dev>