

# 6. Mechanism: Limited Direct Execution

Operating System: Three Easy Pieces

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# How to efficiently virtualize the CPU with control?

- ▣ The OS needs to share the physical CPU by **time sharing**.
- ▣ Issue
  - ◆ **Performance**: How can we implement virtualization without adding excessive overhead to the system?
  - ◆ **Control**: How can we run processes efficiently while retaining control over the CPU?

# Direct Execution

- Just run the program directly on the CPU.

OS	Program
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Create entry for process list</li><li>2. Allocate memory for program</li><li>3. Load program into memory</li><li>4. Set up stack with <code>argc / argv</code></li><li>5. Clear registers</li><li>6. Execute call <code>main()</code></li></ol> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>9. Free memory of process</li><li>10. Remove from process list</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>7. Run <code>main()</code></li><li>8. Execute <code>return from main()</code></li></ol>

**Without *limits* on running programs,  
the OS wouldn't be in control of anything and  
thus would be "just a library"**

# Problem 1: Restricted Operation

- ▣ What if a process wishes to perform some kind of restricted operation such as ...
  - ◆ Issuing an I/O request to a disk
  - ◆ Gaining access to more system resources such as CPU or memory
  
- ▣ **Solution:** Using protected control transfer
  - ◆ **User mode:** Applications do not have full access to hardware resources.
  - ◆ **Kernel mode:** The OS has access to the full resources of the machine

# System Call

- ▣ Allow the kernel to **carefully expose** certain key pieces of functionality to user program, such as ...
  - ◆ Accessing the file system
  - ◆ Creating and destroying processes
  - ◆ Communicating with other processes
  - ◆ Allocating more memory

# System Call (Cont.)

- **Trap** instruction

- ◆ Jump into the kernel
- ◆ Raise the privilege level to kernel mode

- **Return-from-trap** instruction

- ◆ Return into the calling user program
- ◆ Reduce the privilege level back to user mode

# Limited Direction Execution Protocol

OS @ boot  
(kernel mode)

Hardware

initialize trap table

remember address of ...  
syscall handler

OS @ run  
(kernel mode)

Hardware

Program  
(user mode)

Create entry for process list  
Allocate memory for program  
Load program into memory  
Setup user stack with argv  
Fill kernel stack with reg/PC  
**return-from -trap**

restore regs from kernel stack  
move to user mode  
jump to main

Run main()  
...  
Call system  
**trap** into OS

# Limited Direction Execution Protocol (Cont.)

OS @ run  
(kernel mode)

Hardware

Program  
(user mode)

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*(Cont.)*

Handle trap  
Do work of syscall  
**return-from-trap**

save regs to kernel stack  
move to kernel mode  
jump to trap handler

restore regs from kernel stack  
move to user mode  
jump to PC after trap

Free memory of process  
Remove from process list

...  
return from main  
trap (via `exit()`)



## Problem 2: Switching Between Processes

- ▣ How can the OS **regain control** of the CPU so that it can switch between *processes*?
  - ◆ A cooperative Approach: **Wait for system calls**
  - ◆ A Non-Cooperative Approach: **The OS takes control**

# A cooperative Approach: Wait for system calls

- ▣ Processes **periodically give up the CPU** by making **system calls** such as `yield`.
  - ◆ The OS decides to run some other task.
  - ◆ Application also transfer control to the OS when they do something illegal.
    - Divide by zero
    - Try to access memory that it shouldn't be able to access
  - ◆ Ex) Early versions of the Macintosh OS, The old Xerox Alto system

**A process gets stuck in an infinite loop.**  
**→ Reboot the machine**

# A Non-Cooperative Approach: OS Takes Control

## ▣ A timer interrupt

- ◆ During the boot sequence, the OS start the timer.
- ◆ The timer raise an interrupt every so many milliseconds.
- ◆ When the interrupt is raised :
  - The currently running process is halted.
  - Save enough of the state of the program
  - A pre-configured interrupt handler in the OS runs.

**A timer interrupt gives OS the ability to run again on a CPU.**

# Saving and Restoring Context

- ▣ Scheduler makes a decision:
  - ◆ Whether to continue running the **current process**, or switch to a **different one**.
  - ◆ If the decision is made to switch, the OS executes context switch.

# Context Switch

- ▣ A low-level piece of assembly code
  - ◆ **Save a few register values** for the current process onto its kernel stack
    - General purpose registers
    - PC
    - kernel stack pointer
  - ◆ **Restore a few** for the soon-to-be-executing process from its kernel stack
  - ◆ **Switch to the kernel stack** for the soon-to-be-executing process

# Limited Direction Execution Protocol (Timer interrupt)

OS @ boot  
(kernel mode)

Hardware

**initialize trap table**

remember address of ...  
syscall handler  
timer handler

**start interrupt timer**

start timer  
interrupt CPU in X ms

OS @ run  
(kernel mode)

Hardware

Program  
(user mode)

Process A

...

**timer interrupt**

save regs(A) to k-stack(A)  
move to kernel mode  
jump to trap handler

# Limited Direction Execution Protocol (Timer interrupt)

OS @ run  
(kernel mode)

Hardware

Program  
(user mode)

*(Cont.)*

Handle the trap  
Call switch() routine  
    save regs(A) to proc-struct(A)  
    restore regs(B) from proc-struct(B)  
    switch to k-stack(B)  
**return-from-trap (into B)**

restore regs(B) from k-stack(B)  
move to user mode  
jump to B's PC

Process B  
...

# The xv6 Context Switch Code

```
1 # void swtch(struct context **old, struct context *new);
2 #
3 # Save current register context in old
4 # and then load register context from new.
5 .globl swtch
6 swtch:
7     # Save old registers
8     movl 4(%esp), %eax           # put old ptr into eax
9     popl 0(%eax)                # save the old IP
10    movl %esp, 4(%eax)           # and stack
11    movl %ebx, 8(%eax)           # and other registers
12    movl %ecx, 12(%eax)
13    movl %edx, 16(%eax)
14    movl %esi, 20(%eax)
15    movl %edi, 24(%eax)
16    movl %ebp, 28(%eax)
17
18    # Load new registers
19    movl 4(%esp), %eax           # put new ptr into eax
20    movl 28(%eax), %ebp          # restore other registers
21    movl 24(%eax), %edi
22    movl 20(%eax), %esi
23    movl 16(%eax), %edx
24    movl 12(%eax), %ecx
25    movl 8(%eax), %ebx
26    movl 4(%eax), %esp          # stack is switched here
27    pushl 0(%eax)               # return addr put in place
28    ret                         # finally return into new ctxt
```



# Worried About Concurrency?

- ▣ What happens if, during interrupt or trap handling, another interrupt occurs?
- ▣ OS handles these situations:
  - ◆ **Disable interrupts** during interrupt processing
  - ◆ Use a number of sophisticated **locking** schemes to protect concurrent access to internal data structures.

- ▣ Disclaimer: This lecture slide set was initially developed for Operating System course in Computer Science Dept. at Hanyang University. This lecture slide set is for OSTEP book written by Remzi and Andrea at University of Wisconsin.