

# Who is hijacking my NXDOMAINs

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It all began a few days ago when I visited a `.in` domain that I knew didn't exist and instead of getting an error page from the browser, as one might expect, I got a blank page. Well, a blank page for me because I was using an ad-blocker(uBlock Origin) otherwise I would have seen a page filled with ads. This behavior would have been easily explained if I was using ISP provided DNS server for resolving queries. How? Let's start with DNS(Domain Name System). DNS is responsible for mapping domain names to IP addresses and they send an NXDOMAIN(Non-Existent Domain) response if the requested domain name cannot be found and the browser will show an appropriate error page. Some DNS servers, especially the ones provided by ISPs, might resolve queries for non-existing domains to IP address of servers they control which will show ads instead of an NXDOMAIN response which will trigger the usual error page. I was aware that this is a [common practice among many ISPs](#), but I was not using the default DNS recursive name server provided by the ISP but Cloudflare's [1.1.1.1](#) – which certainly does not have such malpractices.

I made sure that my OS was not overriding the DNS server set at router by checking `/etc/resolv.conf`. It had:

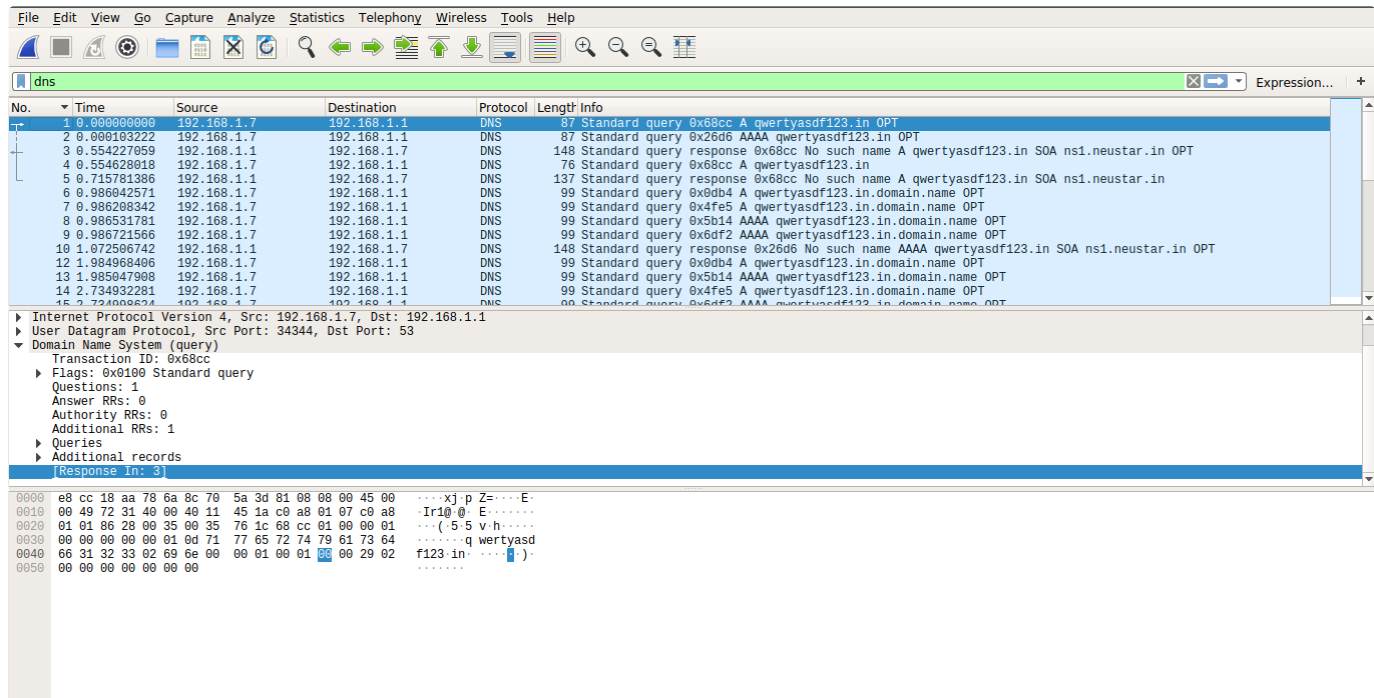
```
...
nameserver 127.0.0.53
options edns0
search domain.name
```

and `systemd-resolve --status` showed:

```
...
Global
    DNS Servers: 192.168.1.1
    DNS Domain: domain.name
    DNSSEC NTA: ...
...
```

This shows that the OS is indeed using the DNS server provided by the router, which uses 1.1.1.1 and 1.0.0.1 as resolvers.

There was no point in blindly trying any further to figure out what was wrong. Time to see what is actually happening using packet sniffing. I used [Wireshark](#) to capture DNS query and response packets when visiting `qwertyasdf123[.]in`, which is a non-existent domain. And this is what it captured:



The screenshot shows a Wireshark capture of DNS traffic. The packet list pane shows several DNS queries and responses. The selected packet is No. 3, which is a response to the query in packet No. 1. The packet details pane shows the response structure, including the transaction ID, flags, and the response code 'No such name'. The packet bytes pane shows the raw data of the DNS response.

The *packet no. 1* above is a DNS query asking for DNS A record (which will point to the IPv4 address of the server hosting the domain), and got the response(*packet no. 3*) as `No such name` (i.e NXDOMAIN as expected). Similarly, we can see that a query is made for DNS AAA record(similar to A record but points to IPv6 address) and got the response(*packet no. 10*) as `No such name`. So far, so good. But *packet no. 6* is a DNS query asking for the server IP of `qwertyasdf123.in.domain[.]name` which got a no record response that the domain name resolves to `78.47.226.171`. On visiting that IP address, I got redirected to the same website that I was being redirected to when I was visiting non-existent `.in` domains – `parrr[.]com`. I repeated these steps a few more times with different domains and every time an NXDOMAIN response is received for both A and AAA record queries, a third query for A record of `<domain>.domain.name` is sent, where `<domain>` is the domain name I typed like `qwertyasdf123.in` or `qwertyasdf123.com`. Does `search domain.name` line in `/etc/resolv.conf` has got anything to do with it? Seems like it does. The [resolv.conf man page](#) says this about the search configuration:

```
...
Resolver queries having fewer than ndots dots (default is 1) in them will be attempted using each component of the search path in turn until a match is found.
...
ndots:n
Sets a threshold for the number of dots which must appear in a name given to res_query(3) (see resolver(3)) before an initial absolute query will be made. The default for n is 1, meaning that if there are any dots in a name, the name will be tried first as an absolute name before any search list elements are appended to it. The value for this option is silently capped to 15.
```

After a couple of searches on the web, I figured out what that means – under the default case(when `ndots` option is not set), for resolving `example.com`, the resolver will try to resolve `example.com` first and if it fails, it'll append search list domain(in this case `domain.name`) to it and try to resolve it. So in our case, when a query for the host address of `qwertyasdf123.in` results in an NXDOMAIN, the resolver will try to resolve `qwertyasdf123.in.domain.name`. `name` is indeed a top-level domain extension just like `.com` or `.org` and someone might have brought `domain.name` and configured a wildcard DNS record to redirect all `<anything>.domain.name` queries to a server filled with ads.

I decided to figure out more about `domain.name` and confirm that it had a wildcard DNS record pointing to `78.47.226.171` before finding out how the `search domain.name` line got into my `resolv.conf` file. I ruled it out as something I might have carelessly configured during OS installation. I did `dig *.domain.name` and got:

```
...
;; Got answer:
;; ->>HEADER<<- opcode: QUERY, status: NXDOMAIN, id: 8453
;; flags: qr rd ra; QUERY: 1, ANSWER: 0, AUTHORITY: 0, ADDITIONAL: 1
...
```

status: NXDOMAIN - that was an unexpected response, which means \*.domain.name is a non-existent domain name. Well, it seems like .name allows third-level registrations (i.e. in.domain.name and say, com.domain.name are separately registered) and domain.name is shared and cannot be registered individually. And dig \*.in.domain.name returned:

```
...
;; ANSWER SECTION:
*.in.domain.name.      898      IN      CNAME   in.domain.name.
in.domain.name.        897      IN      A        78.47.226.171
...
```

An A record pointing to 78.47.226.171 as expected. When I visited that address on my browser, the server responded with a 302 redirect to [http://parrz\[.\]com/?dn=226.171](http://parrz[.]com/?dn=226.171) which contains some obfuscated JavaScript code that will either show ads or redirect the user to shady betting and trading websites. I decided to do a quick search on parrz[.]com and found a similar case on a [Spanish ISP forum](#) - in which the user posted that visiting non-existing .es domains on both their laptop and android smartphone are redirected to parrz[.]com. They finally resolved the problem by replacing their router. With this new knowledge, I tried visiting [qwertyasdf123.in](#) on my android smartphone and it got redirected to the same parrz[.]com, hinting that the domain.name in resolv.conf is probably coming from my router. Furthermore, it showed that es.domain.name is also registered and redirects to parrz[.]com. I got a list of all ccTLDs on a text file and ran the following bash commands to see how many such domains are registered:

```
cat ccTLDs.txt | while read line; do dig "$line.domain.name" | tail -7 | head -1 | awk '{ print $1 "\t" $5 }'; done > resolvedDomains.txt
```

which will try to resolve each domain extension in the list suffixed with domain.name and stores resolved IP address along with it into a file (resolvedDomains.txt) like this:

```
AC.domain.name. 78.47.226.171
AD.domain.name. 78.47.226.171
AE.domain.name. 78.47.226.171
AF.domain.name. 78.47.226.171
...
```

Many domains are mapped to a few IP addresses, let's see how many domains resolve to each using:

```
cat resolvedDomains.txt | awk '{ print $2 }' | sort | uniq -c
```

which returned:

```
11
1 174.139.160.58
1 217.70.184.38
1 77.78.104.3
237 78.47.226.171
```

Almost all of them are pointed to 78.47.226.171 which redirects to parrz[.]com. All of the domains which points to it have Gransy, s.r.o. as the domain registrar so it is not clear whether these domains are [parked](#) or not. If not, .domain.name registration costs 14.70 USD on regtons[.]com (Gransy's "domain solution" according to their website) and for 237 domain names, it would have cost them 3,483 USD per year. Parrz[.]com has an [Alexa rank](#) of around 40,000 in India, which is too much for a website that just shows shady advertisements. If so, I'm probably not alone in having this problem.

Now the only question that remains is how domain.name got added in the search option of /etc/resolv.conf. After searching for a while, turns out that if the DHCP server (in this case my router) responds with either Option 15 (Domain Name) or Option 119 (Domain Search List) set, it is added to the search list. Time to see if that's the case using Wireshark:

The image shows a Wireshark packet capture of a DHCP Offer packet. The packet list pane shows a DHCP Offer packet (No. 76) at time 0.000000000, source 0.0.0.0, destination 255.255.255.255, protocol DHCP, length 364. The packet details pane shows the DHCP Offer packet structure, including the Router option (192.168.1.1), Domain Name Server option (192.168.1.1), and Domain Name option (domain.name). The packet bytes pane shows the raw data of the packet, including the DHCP Offer packet structure and the Domain Name option.

No.	Time	Source	Destination	Protocol	Length	Info
1	0.000000000	0.0.0.0	255.255.255.255	DHCP	364	DHCP Request - Transaction ID 0xef94de28
2	0.003492099	0.0.0.0	255.255.255.255	DHCP	364	DHCP Request - Transaction ID 0xef94de28
48	12.085943958	192.168.1.7	192.168.1.1	DHCP	342	DHCP Release - Transaction ID 0x8e2dc433
55	40.754295357	0.0.0.0	255.255.255.255	DHCP	348	DHCP Request - Transaction ID 0x13cc435c
57	40.960143020	0.0.0.0	255.255.255.255	DHCP	348	DHCP Request - Transaction ID 0x13cc435c
60	41.573493205	0.0.0.0	255.255.255.255	DHCP	348	DHCP Request - Transaction ID 0x13cc435c
68	42.495034514	0.0.0.0	255.255.255.255	DHCP	348	DHCP Request - Transaction ID 0x13cc435c
75	53.483188868	0.0.0.0	255.255.255.255	DHCP	342	DHCP Discover - Transaction ID 0xa2bac733
76	53.547925293	192.168.1.1	192.168.1.7	DHCP	342	DHCP Offer - Transaction ID 0xa2bac733
77	53.548325473	0.0.0.0	255.255.255.255	DHCP	342	DHCP Request - Transaction ID 0xa2bac733
81	55.803531054	192.168.1.1	192.168.1.7	DHCP	342	DHCP ACK - Transaction ID 0xa2bac733

Option: (3) Router  
Length: 4  
Router: 192.168.1.1  
Option: (6) Domain Name Server  
Length: 4  
Domain Name Server: 192.168.1.1  
Option: (15) Domain Name  
Length: 11  
Domain Name: domain.name  
Option: (255) End  
Option End: 255  
Padding: 00000000000000000000000000000000

0000 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 .....  
0090 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 .....  
00a0 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 .....  
00b0 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 .....  
00c0 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 .....  
00d0 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 .....  
00e0 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 .....  
00f0 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 .....  
0100 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 .....  
0110 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 63 82 53 63 35 01 02 36 04 c0 .....C..Sc5..6..  
0120 a8 01 01 33 04 00 01 51 80 01 04 ff ff ff 00 03 .....3...Q.....  
0130 04 c0 a8 01 01 06 04 c0 a8 01 01 0f 0b 04 0f 00 .....0cm.....  
0140 01 09 0e 2e 0e 01 0d 05 ff 00 00 00 00 00 00 .....ain.name.....  
0150 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 .....

Packet no. 76 is a DHCP Offer packet from the router and, as expected, has Option 15 (Domain Name) set as domain.name. So it is indeed coming from the router and I found it in Setup > Local Network > DHCP Server as:

DHCP SERVER SETTINGS

LAN IP: 192.168.1.1/255.255.255.0

DHCP Mode: DHCP Server

Interface: ☒ LAN1 ☒ LAN2 ☒ LAN3 ☒ LAN4 ☐ WLAN

IP Pool Range: 192.168.1.2 - 192.168.1.254 

Show Client

Max Lease Time: 1440 minutes

Domain Name: domain.name


DNS Servers: 192.168.1.1

Apply Changes

Undo

Set VendorClass IP Range

I replaced it with `dlink-home-network` , restarted the router and then visited some non-existent .in domain and instead of being redirected to ads about trading and betting, I got:



Hmm. We're having trouble finding that site.

We can't connect to the server at kjalkfjadsf.in.

If that address is correct, here are three other things you can try:

• Try again later.

• Check your network connection.

• If you are connected but behind a firewall, check that Firefox has permission to access the Web.

Try Again

Problem solved! I tried to find out if `domain.name` was the default value for that field for my router but didn't find anything on the web. I asked some of my friends who have D-Link routers and while the newer ones had that field blank or the names `dlinkrouter` or just `dlink` some of the older models had `domain.name` just like me. These models were DSL 2730-U(firmware version IN\_1.11 and IN\_1.10) and DIR-600M(firmware version 3.04). Do check your router settings and if you have `domain.name` or anything ending with a valid `tld`, replace it with something like `my-home-network` .

cybersecurity

dns network security