

pqARKG-H: An extension of pqARKG for Hierarchical Deterministic Keys

Emil Lundberg
Yubico AB
emil@yubico.com

February 17, 2025

Abstract

Hierarchical Deterministic Keys (HDK) is a draft specification using key blinding techniques including ARKG to create hierarchies of keys all derived from a single root secret key, in such a way that only the root secret key needs to be kept in a secure element (SE) and new public keys can be generated without invoking the SE. However, when ARKG is used in HDK, the original ARKG procedures would require one SE invocation per HDK layer when exercising derived private keys. This is undesirable in contexts where each SE invocation would require a distinct user gesture.

To address this we analyze the security of an ARKG extension pqARKG-H that enables any number of HDK layers with a single SE invocation. We base pqARKG-H on the ARKG generalization pqARKG, and demonstrate that it retains msKS security by a straightforward reduction of the security experiment.

1 Introduction

Hierarchical Deterministic Keys (HDK) [Dij25] is a draft specification using key blinding techniques including ARKG [LB25] to create hierarchies of keys all derived from a single root secret key, in such a way that only the root secret key needs to be kept in a secure element (SE) and new public keys can be generated without invoking the SE. However, when ARKG is used in HDK, the original ARKG procedures would require one SE invocation of `DeriveSK` per HDK layer when exercising derived private keys. This is undesirable in contexts where each SE invocation would require a distinct user gesture. One such context is the WebAuthn “sign” extension [Lun24] proposed to introduce general-purpose signing capabilities to the Web Authentication API (WebAuthn) [Bal+25], including signing using private keys derived via ARKG. Since WebAuthn requires a user gesture for any sign-

ing operation, HDK operations based on this “sign” extension would also require one user gesture per HDK layer.

The ARKG construction in [LB25] is based upon pqARKG [Wil23], a post-quantum compatible generalization of the original ARKG [Fry+20]. Here we propose and analyze pqARKG-H, an extension of pqARKG for better compatibility with HDK. pqARKG-H enables any number of HDK layers with a single invocation of the DeriveSK procedure.

The next section repeats the definition of pqARKG and its msKS security experiment. Then we propose the extension pqARKG-H and its corresponding security experiment, and finally demonstrate by a straightforward reduction that pqARKG-H retains the msKS property of pqARKG.

2 pqARKG

Here we repeat the definition of pqARKG and its msKS security experiment [Wil23]. The instance parameters are a key blinding scheme Δ , a key encapsulation mechanism (KEM) Π and a pseudo-random function PRF outputting blinding factors in the domain of Δ .

pqARKG is defined as the suite of procedures in Figure 1. The msKS security experiment for pqARKG is defined in Figure 2.¹

3 pqARKG-H

Here we define our modified pqARKG-H scheme and a corresponding msKS security experiment.

A new parameter b is added to the DerivePK and DeriveSK functions. This b is an additional blinding factor in the key blinding scheme Δ , allowing the ARKG subordinate party (the party generating public keys) to add any number of additional blinding layers on top of the one performed by the ARKG delegating party (the party holding the ARKG private seed). To prevent choosing $b = -\tau$ so that it cancels the blinding factor τ computed in step 2 of DeriveSK of pqARKG, this b is also mixed into the PRF arguments to compute τ . This disrupts any algebraic relationship between b and τ , thus preventing extraction of the private seed \mathbf{sk} by a malicious choice of b even if a derived private key \mathbf{sk}' is leaked.

The new argument mixed into the PRF is however not b directly, but a blinded public key \mathbf{pk}_Δ^b incorporating the blinding factor b . This enables the subordinate party to prove to a third party that a derived key pair $(\mathbf{sk}', \mathbf{pk}')$ is cryptographically associated with a given pqARKG-H seed – meaning that knowing \mathbf{sk}' is equivalent to knowing the pqARKG-H private seed – without disclosing b . This is desirable if the subordinate party does not

¹We have corrected a misprint in [Wil23] writing τ in place of k on line 3 of $\mathcal{O}_{\mathbf{sk}'}$, renamed the variable \mathbf{ck} to τ in $\mathcal{O}_{\mathbf{pk}'}$, and made explicit the argument \mathbf{pp} to Check.

Setup(λ)

1 : **return** $\text{pp} = (\Delta, \Pi, \text{PRF})$

Check($\text{pp}, \text{sk}', \text{pk}'$)

1 : **return** $\Delta.\text{Check}(\text{sk}', \text{pk}')$

KeyGen(pp)

1 : $(\text{sk}_\Delta, \text{pk}_\Delta) \leftarrow \Delta.\text{KeyGen}()$
 2 : $(\text{sk}_\Pi, \text{pk}_\Pi) \leftarrow \Pi.\text{KeyGen}()$
 3 : **return** $\text{sk} = (\text{sk}_\Delta, \text{sk}_\Pi), \text{pk} = (\text{pk}_\Delta, \text{pk}_\Pi)$

DerivePK($\text{pp}, \text{pk} = (\text{pk}_\Delta, \text{pk}_\Pi), \text{aux}$)

1 : $(c, k) \leftarrow \Pi.\text{Encaps}(\text{pk}_\Pi)$
 2 : $\tau \leftarrow \text{PRF}(k, \text{aux})$
 3 : $\text{pk}' \leftarrow \Delta.\text{BlindPK}(\text{pk}_\Delta, \tau)$
 4 : **return** $\text{pk}', \text{cred} = (c, \text{aux})$

DeriveSK($\text{pp}, \text{sk} = (\text{sk}_\Delta, \text{sk}_\Pi), \text{cred} = (c, \text{aux})$)

1 : $k \leftarrow \Pi.\text{Decaps}(\text{sk}_\Pi, c)$
 2 : $\tau \leftarrow \text{PRF}(k, \text{aux})$
 3 : **return** $\Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\text{sk}_\Delta, \tau)$

Figure 1: Algorithms of the pqARKG scheme [Wil23].

$\text{Exp}_{pqARKG, \mathcal{A}}^{\text{msKS}}(\lambda)$

1 : $\text{pp} \leftarrow \text{Setup}(1^\lambda)$
 2 : $\text{PKList} \leftarrow \emptyset$
 3 : $\text{SKList} \leftarrow \emptyset$
 4 : $(\text{sk}, \text{pk}) \leftarrow \text{KeyGen}()$
 5 : $(\text{sk}^*, \text{pk}^*, \text{cred}^*) \leftarrow \mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{O}_{\text{pk}'}, \mathcal{O}_{\text{sk}'}}(\text{pp}, \text{pk})$
 6 : $\text{sk}' \leftarrow \text{DeriveSK}(\text{pp}, \text{sk}, \text{cred}^*)$
 7 : **return** $\text{Check}(\text{pp}, \text{sk}^*, \text{pk}^*)$
 8 : $\quad \wedge \text{Check}(\text{pp}, \text{sk}', \text{pk}^*)$
 9 : $\quad \wedge [\text{cred}^* \notin \text{SKList}]$

$\mathcal{O}_{\text{pk}'}(\text{aux})$

1 : $(c, k) \leftarrow \Pi.\text{Encaps}(\text{pk}_\Pi)$
 2 : $\tau \leftarrow \text{PRF}(k, \text{aux})$
 3 : $\text{pk}' \leftarrow \Delta.\text{BlindPK}(\text{pk}_\Delta, \tau)$
 4 : $\text{PKList} \leftarrow \text{PKList} \cup \{(\text{pk}', (c, \text{aux}))\}$
 5 : **return** $\text{pk}', (c, \text{aux})$

$\mathcal{O}_{\text{sk}'}(c, \text{aux})$

1 : **if** $(\cdot, (c, \text{aux})) \notin \text{PKList}$ **then return** \perp
 2 : $\text{SKList} \leftarrow \text{SKList} \cup \{(c, \text{aux})\}$
 3 : $k \leftarrow \Pi.\text{Decaps}(\text{sk}_\Pi, c)$
 4 : $\tau \leftarrow \text{PRF}(k, \text{aux})$
 5 : **return** $\Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\text{sk}_\Delta, \tau)$

Figure 2: The msKS security experiment for pqARKG [Wil23].

wish to reveal the relationship with other keys in an HDK tree which might be used for unrelated purposes; knowing b would enable the third party to unblind \mathbf{pk}' to reveal the root public seed \mathbf{pk}_Δ . Instead, the subordinate party may receive k and \mathbf{aux} and recompute steps 3–5 of `DerivePK` with $\mathbf{pk}_\Delta = \mathbf{pk}_\Delta^b$ and $b = \mathbf{id}_\Delta$, the identity blinding factor, and thus be convinced that \mathbf{pk}' is cryptographically associated with the claimed public seed \mathbf{pk}_Δ^b .

Finally, the `DeriveSK` function of `pqARKG-H` also receives the blinding key \mathbf{pk}_Δ as a new parameter in order to reconstruct the same PRF output as `DerivePK`. This \mathbf{pk}_Δ parameter may be eliminated in instantiations where \mathbf{pk}_Δ can be computed from \mathbf{sk}_Δ .

`pqARKG-H` requires three additional properties of the key blinding scheme Δ :

1. There exists an *identity blinding factor*, denoted \mathbf{id}_Δ , such that

$$\Delta.\text{BlindPK}(\mathbf{pk}, \mathbf{id}_\Delta) = \mathbf{pk} \text{ and } \Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\mathbf{sk}, \mathbf{id}_\Delta) = \mathbf{sk}$$

for all \mathbf{pk} and \mathbf{sk} .

2. Δ supports *public key unblinding* in addition to private key unblinding: A function $\Delta.\text{UnblindPK}(\mathbf{pk}, b)$ such that

$$\Delta.\text{UnblindPK}(\Delta.\text{BlindPK}(\mathbf{pk}, b), b) = \mathbf{pk}$$

for all \mathbf{pk} and b .

3. Δ is *commutative* in the blinding factor: for all \mathbf{pk} , \mathbf{sk} , a and b ,

$$\Delta.\text{BlindPK}(\Delta.\text{BlindPK}(\mathbf{pk}, a), b) = \Delta.\text{BlindPK}(\Delta.\text{BlindPK}(\mathbf{pk}, b), a)$$

$$\Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\mathbf{sk}, a), b) = \Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\mathbf{sk}, b), a).$$

For example, any construction based on cyclic groups is likely to satisfy these properties.

`pqARKG-H` is defined as the suite of procedures in Figure 3.² The operator \parallel denotes binary concatenation, and we assume some well-known encoding is used for \mathbf{pk}_Δ^b .

We also modify the `msKS` security experiment accordingly, resulting in the security experiment $\text{Exp}_{pqARKG-H, \mathcal{B}}^{\text{msKS}}$ presented in Figure 4. The main difference is that the adversary \mathcal{B} also returns the value b^* to be used as the b argument to `DeriveSK`. The public and private key oracles $\mathcal{O}_{\mathbf{pk}'}$ and $\mathcal{O}_{\mathbf{sk}'}$ are also updated to include the b parameter and the additional blinding step. Finally, the check against \mathcal{B} trivially querying $\mathcal{O}_{\mathbf{sk}'}$ for a solution is relaxed to forbid only the exact combination of b^* and \mathbf{cred}^* returned as the solution.

²Note that if $\Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\mathbf{sk}, b)$ is linear in b with operation \circ , then steps 4–5 of `DeriveSK` may be optimized as "4. **return** $\Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\mathbf{sk}_\Delta, b \circ \tau)$ ".

Setup: Same as pqARKG.
Check: Same as pqARKG.
KeyGen: Same as pqARKG.

DerivePK(pp, pk = (pk_Δ, pk_Π), b, aux)

```

1 : (c, k) ← Π.Encaps(pkΠ)
2 : pkΔb ← Δ.BlindPK(pkΔ, b)
3 : τ ← PRF(k, pkΔb || aux)
4 : pk' ← Δ.BlindPK(pkΔb, τ)
5 : return pk', cred = (c, aux)

```

DeriveSK(pp, pk_Δ, sk = (sk_Δ, sk_Π), b, cred = (c, aux))

```

1 : k ← Π.Decaps(skΠ, c)
2 : pkΔb ← Δ.BlindPK(pkΔ, b)
3 : τ ← PRF(k, pkΔb || aux)
4 : skΔb ← Δ.BlindSK(skΔ, b)
5 : return Δ.BlindSK(skΔb, τ)

```

Figure 3: Algorithms of the pqARKG-H scheme. The Setup, Check and KeyGen algorithms are unchanged from pqARKG.

$\text{Exp}_{pqARKG-H, B}^{\text{msKS}}(\lambda)$

```

1 : pp ← Setup(1λ)
2 : PKList ← ∅
3 : SKList ← ∅
4 : (sk, pk) ← $ KeyGen()
5 : (sk*, pk*, b*, cred*) ← $  $\mathcal{B}^{\mathcal{O}_{pk'}, \mathcal{O}_{sk'}}(\text{pp}, \text{pk})$ 
6 : sk' ← DeriveSK(pp, pkΔ, sk, b*, cred*)
7 : return Check(pp, sk*, pk*)
8 :   ∧ Check(pp, sk', pk*)
9 :   ∧ [(b*, cred*) ∉ SKList]

```

$\mathcal{O}_{pk'}(b, \text{aux})$

```

1 : (pk', cred) ← $ DerivePK(pp, pk, b, aux)
2 : PKList ← PKList ∪ {(pk', cred)}
3 : return (pk', cred)

```

$\mathcal{O}_{sk'}(b, c, \text{aux})$

```

1 : if (·, (c, aux)) ∉ PKList then return ⊥
2 : SKList ← SKList ∪ {(b, (c, aux))}
3 : return DeriveSK(pp, pkΔ, sk, b, (c, aux))

```

Figure 4: The msKS security experiment for pqARKG-H.

$\mathcal{A}^{\mathcal{O}_{pk'}, \mathcal{O}_{sk'}}(pp = (\Delta, \Pi, \text{PRF}), pk = (pk_\Delta, pk_\Pi))$	$\overline{\mathcal{O}_{pk'}}(b, aux)$
1 : $(sk^*, pk^*, \bar{b}^*, (\bar{c}^*, \overline{aux^*})) \leftarrow \mathcal{B}^{\mathcal{O}_{pk'}, \mathcal{O}_{sk'}}(pp, pk)$	1 : $pk_\Delta^b \leftarrow \Delta.\text{BlindPK}(pk_\Delta, b)$
2 : $sk^* \leftarrow \Delta.\text{UnblindSK}(\overline{sk^*}, \bar{b}^*)$	2 : $(pk', (c, \cdot)) \leftarrow \mathcal{O}_{pk'}(pk_\Delta^b \parallel aux)$
3 : $pk^* \leftarrow \Delta.\text{UnblindPK}(\overline{pk^*}, \bar{b}^*)$	3 : $\overline{pk'} \leftarrow \Delta.\text{BlindPK}(pk', b)$
4 : $pk_\Delta^{b^*} \leftarrow \Delta.\text{BlindPK}(pk_\Delta, \bar{b}^*)$	4 : return $(\overline{pk'}, (c, aux))$
5 : return $(sk^*, pk^*, (\bar{c}^*, pk_\Delta^{b^*} \parallel \overline{aux^*}))$	

$\overline{\mathcal{O}_{sk'}}(b, c, aux)$
1 : $pk_\Delta^b \leftarrow \Delta.\text{BlindPK}(pk_\Delta, b)$
2 : $sk' \leftarrow \mathcal{O}_{sk'}(c, pk_\Delta^b \parallel aux)$
3 : return $\Delta.\text{BlindSK}(sk', b)$

Figure 5: Reduction of $\text{Exp}_{pqARKG, \mathcal{A}}^{\text{msKS}}$ to $\text{Exp}_{pqARKG-H, \mathcal{B}}^{\text{msKS}}$.

4 Reduction of pqARKG to pqARKG-H in msKS security experiment

We now show that pqARKG-H is msKS secure by showing that an adversary \mathcal{B} that defeats $\text{Exp}_{pqARKG-H, \mathcal{B}}^{\text{msKS}}$ also defeats $\text{Exp}_{pqARKG, \mathcal{A}}^{\text{msKS}}$. Given such an adversary \mathcal{B} , we construct an adversary \mathcal{A} that defeats $\text{Exp}_{pqARKG, \mathcal{A}}^{\text{msKS}}$ as defined in Figure 5.

When invoked, this adversary \mathcal{A} simply invokes the given adversary \mathcal{B} with its own challenge. The $\mathcal{O}_{pk'}$ and $\mathcal{O}_{sk'}$ oracles are adapted for \mathcal{B} by adding the pk_Δ^b prefix to aux and performing the additional blinding with the b argument, thus \mathcal{A} faithfully simulates $\text{Exp}_{pqARKG-H, \mathcal{B}}^{\text{msKS}}$ for \mathcal{B} . The aux^* returned to the challenger is adapted with the $pk_\Delta^{b^*}$ prefix computed using the blinding factor $\bar{b}^* = b^*$ returned by \mathcal{B} , thus pqARKG-H produces the same τ on line 3 of its `DerivePK` and `DeriveSK` functions as pqARKG does on line 2 of its `DerivePK` and `DeriveSK` functions.

We see that \mathcal{A} passes the conditions on lines 7-9 of $\text{Exp}_{pqARKG, \mathcal{A}}^{\text{msKS}}$:

- $\text{Check}(pp, sk^*, pk^*)$ succeeds because:
 $sk^* = \Delta.\text{UnblindSK}(\overline{sk^*}, \bar{b}^*)$ and $pk^* = \Delta.\text{UnblindPK}(\overline{pk^*}, \bar{b}^*)$. Therefore by the definitions of unblinding and unique blinding, \mathcal{A} passes its $\text{Check}(pp, sk^*, pk^*)$ condition precisely when \mathcal{B} does.
- $\text{Check}(pp, sk', pk^*)$ succeeds because:
First, observe that $c^* = \bar{c}^*$ and $aux^* = pk_\Delta^{b^*} \parallel \overline{aux^*}$, and therefore
 $\tau = \text{PRF}(\Pi.\text{Decaps}(sk_\Pi, c^*), aux^*) = \text{PRF}(\Pi.\text{Decaps}(sk_\Pi, \bar{c}^*), pk_\Delta^{b^*} \parallel \overline{aux^*})$

so DeriveSK on line 6 of $\text{Exp}_{pqARKG, \mathcal{A}}^{\text{msKS}}$ computes the same τ as on line 6 of $\text{Exp}_{pqARKG-H, \mathcal{B}}^{\text{msKS}}$.

The above gives

$$\begin{aligned} \text{sk}' &= \text{DeriveSK}(\text{pp}, \text{sk}, \text{cred}^*) = \\ &= \Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\text{sk}_\Delta, \text{PRF}(\Pi.\text{Decaps}(\text{sk}_\Pi, c^*), \text{aux}^*)) \\ &= \Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\text{sk}_\Delta, \tau) \end{aligned}$$

where $\text{cred}^* = (c^*, \text{aux}^*)$.

Let $\overline{\text{sk}'}$ be an alias of the sk' on line 6 of $\text{Exp}_{pqARKG-H, \mathcal{B}}^{\text{msKS}}$. Then

$$\begin{aligned} \overline{\text{sk}'} &= \text{DeriveSK}(\text{pp}, \text{pk}_\Delta, \text{sk}, \overline{b^*}, \overline{\text{cred}^*}) = \\ &= \Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\text{sk}_\Delta, \overline{b^*}), \tau) = \\ &= \Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\text{sk}_\Delta, \tau), \overline{b^*}) = \\ &= \Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\text{sk}', \overline{b^*}) \\ &\implies \text{sk}' = \Delta.\text{UnblindSK}(\overline{\text{sk}'}, \overline{b^*}) \end{aligned}$$

so by the definitions of unblinding and unique blinding, the $\text{Check}(\text{pp}, \text{sk}', \text{pk}^*)$ condition in $\text{Exp}_{pqARKG-H, \mathcal{B}}^{\text{msKS}}$ is equivalent to

$$\begin{aligned} &\text{Check}(\text{pp}, \Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\text{sk}', \overline{b^*}), \overline{\text{pk}^*}) = \\ &= \text{Check}(\text{pp}, \Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\text{sk}', \overline{b^*}), \Delta.\text{BlindPK}(\Delta.\text{UnblindPK}(\overline{\text{pk}^*}, \overline{b^*}), \overline{b^*})) = \\ &= \text{Check}(\text{pp}, \Delta.\text{BlindSK}(\text{sk}', \overline{b^*}), \Delta.\text{BlindPK}(\text{pk}^*, \overline{b^*})) = \\ &= \text{Check}(\text{pp}, \text{sk}', \text{pk}^*) \end{aligned}$$

which is precisely the condition on line 8 of $\text{Exp}_{pqARKG, \mathcal{A}}^{\text{msKS}}$. Therefore \mathcal{A} passes its $\text{Check}(\text{pp}, \text{sk}', \text{pk}^*)$ condition precisely when \mathcal{B} does.

- $(c^*, \text{aux}^*) \notin \text{SKList}$ succeeds because:

SKList is appended to only when \mathcal{A} invokes $\mathcal{O}_{\text{sk}'}$, which it does only when \mathcal{B} invokes $\overline{\mathcal{O}_{\text{sk}'}}$. Therefore if \mathcal{B} does not invoke $\overline{\mathcal{O}_{\text{sk}'}}$ with arguments (b^*, c^*, aux^*) , then \mathcal{A} also does not invoke $\mathcal{O}_{\text{sk}'}$ with arguments (c^*, aux^*) . This is the case when \mathcal{B} wins its game, therefore \mathcal{A} passes this condition when \mathcal{B} does.

In conclusion, we see that \mathcal{A} wins its game precisely when \mathcal{B} wins its game, therefore the advantages are equal:

$$\text{Adv}_{pqARKG-H, \mathcal{B}}^{\text{msKS}}(\lambda) = \text{Adv}_{pqARKG, \mathcal{A}}^{\text{msKS}}(\lambda)$$

Thus we conclude that pqARKG-H retains the msKS property of pqARKG .

5 Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Sander Dijkhuis for proposing the construction with mixing pk_Δ^b into the PRF instead of b , and for helping find a successful approach for the security reduction.

References

- [Bal+25] Dirk Balfanz et al. *Web Authentication: An API for accessing Public Key Credentials*. 2025. URL: <https://www.w3.org/TR/2025/WD-webauthn-3-20250127/>. Level 3 working draft.
- [Dij25] Sander Dijkhuis. *Hierarchical Deterministic Keys*. 2025. URL: <https://www.ietf.org/archive/id/draft-dijkhuis-cfrg-hdkeys-06.html>. Version 06.
- [Fry+20] Nick Frymann et al. “Asynchronous Remote Key Generation: An Analysis of Yubico’s Proposal for W3C WebAuthn”. In: *Proceedings of the 2020 ACM SIGSAC Conference on Computer and Communications Security*. CCS ’20. Virtual Event, USA: Association for Computing Machinery, 2020, pp. 939–954. ISBN: 9781450370899. DOI: 10.1145/3372297.3417292. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1145/3372297.3417292>.
- [LB25] Emil Lundberg and John Bradley. *The Asynchronous Remote Key Generation (ARKG) algorithm*. 2025. URL: <https://www.ietf.org/archive/id/draft-bradleylundberg-cfrg-arkg-03.html>. Version 03.
- [Lun24] Emil Lundberg. *Add “sign” extension*. 2024. URL: <https://github.com/w3c/webauthn/pull/2078>. W3C Web Authentication issue tracker, accessed 2025-01-31.
- [Wil23] Spencer MacLaren Wilson. *Post-Quantum Account Recovery for Passwordless Authentication*. 2023. URL: <https://uwaterloo.ca/items/d1f73f71-e3b2-438c-b261-11632becdbb2>.