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### Apprentissage Fédéré pour la Détection Collaborative d'Intrusions

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## INTRODUCTION

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#### 1.1 Context and Motivation

Modern information security is made difficult by the scale, complexity, and heterogeneity of information systems. Because security by design in these conditions is an impossible task, security agencies also recommend complementary measures. For instance, the NIST Cybersecurity Framework [Nat24] suggests a five-stage lifecycle for managing risks in information systems: identify, protect, detect, respond, and recover.

Detection and response immensely benefit from the recent advances in artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), enabling the analysis of more complex behaviors. Yet, because organization usually face similar threats, including large-scale campaigns such as Mirai in 2016 or NotPetya in 2017, they would greatly benefit from sharing insights on the intrusions they have encountered, or any knowledge that might help others to identify incident before the damages are too important. Collaboration is further encouraged by regulation, for instance with the NIS [16] and NIS2 [22] European directives. Sharing data is made even more important for training ML and deep learning (DL) models, which require large amounts of data to be effective. Yet, stakeholders are often reluctant to involve their organization in data-sharing practices, fearing confidentiality and privacy breaches, reputation loss, or regulation non-compliance.

Federated learning (FL) [McM+17] has emerged as a promising paradigm for collaborative ML, enabling model training across distributed data sources while preserving privacy. Deployed in intrusion detection contexts, FL can help organizations to virtually extend the size of their training sets, thus producing more accurate models. This architecture could also be used to disseminate information about esoteric attacks or devices behavior owned locally, that would benefit to other organizations. FL also promises to solve other drawbacks of ML-based intrusion detection systems (IDSs), such as the need

for continuous retraining[?], the lack of adaptability to new threats[?], or the risk of local biases due to a lack of heterogeneity in the training set[?].

Consequently, applying FL to IDS seems like a promising approach to collaboratively improve the local detection of cyber threats. This is supported by the amount of recent literature on the topic, which has grown exponentially since 2018 [Lav+22b; Ism+24]. Yet, novel challenges arise in this context, such as how to handle the heterogeneity of data sources, how to deal with untrusted participants, or how to improve the performance of local models. But more importantly, what makes applying FL to IDS different from other applications? And is FL even a suitable framework for collaborative IDS?

This dissertation aims to investigate the potential of federated learning as a collaborative framework for intrusion detection system, which we will refer to as federated intrusion detection system (FIDS). The remaining of this manuscript will discuss the state of the art in FL and IDS, some of the challenges that arise in this context, and the potential solutions to address them.

#### 1.1.1 Use case boundaries

While applying FL to IDS can already be considered as a restricted scope, the IDS literature contains a wide variety of use cases, each coming with its own set of specificities and constraints. For instance, IDSs can be deployed at the network level, the host level, or the application level. Likewise, objectives and constraints may vary depending on the context and the type of devices involved: internet of things (IoT), industrial control system (ICS), or traditional information systems. Among the most common combinations, network-based intrusion detection system (NIDS) on information technology (IT) network data stands out, notably in terms of implemented algorithms and available datasets. This is particularly important for evaluation purposes, as it makes it easier to compare the performance of different approaches.

Consequently, this dissertation will focus on the use case of building collaborative NIDSs by leveraging FL on IT network data. In this context, FL clients are assumed to be organizations that own or oversee an information system, and that are interested in improving their local IDS by sharing information with other organizations. However, the results of these works could theoretically be extended to other use cases. Figure 1.1 illustrates the delineation of our use case.

## 1.2 Research Objectives

Based on the context and motivation laid out in the previous section, we formulize the general objectives of this dissertation as a set of research questions. The questions stated hereafter are intended to be completed and extended in the following chapters,

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Figure 1.1 – Use case

some of which introduce their own research questions. Overall, this work aims to answer the following: Can FL serve as a trustable knowledge-sharing framework for collaboratively improving intrusion detection mechanisms?

Specifically, we focus on the following research questions:

- **RQ1.** What makes applying FL to IDSs specific?
- **RQ2.** Can FL be used to federate IDSs across heterogeneous data sources?
- RQ3. How does FL handle malicious contributions in a federated IDS?
- **RQ4.** How can we address the main challenges in applying FL to IDS?

#### 1.3 Contributions

We summarize the contributions of this dissertation as follows:

- 1. The first systematic literature review (SLR) on applying FL to IDS, with quantitative and qualitative analyses of the existing works, as well as the proposal of a reference architecture and a taxonomy for structuring the domain.
- 2. A demonstration highlighting the challenges of heterogeneity and malicious contributions in FIDS.
- 3. An extensible evaluation framework for FIDSs called Eiffel, leveraging popular open source libraries like Flower [Beu+20] and Hydra [Yad19], and a set of malicious clients simulators.
- 4. A systematic analysis of the impact of label-flipping attacks on an FL-based collaborative IDS, leveraging the aforementioned evaluation framework.

- 5. The first FL architecture for collaborative IDS that handles malicious contributions in heterogeneous environments, leveraging a cross-evaluation mechanism and a reputation system.
- 6. A methodology allowing to generate network topologies with heterogeneity constraints, and laying down the foundations toward a more realistic evaluation of FIDS and distributed networking telemetry experiments in general.

#### 1.4 Outline

Outside of the introduction and conclusion, the manuscript is organized in three parts: defining FIDSs, quantifying their limitations, and providing solutions to address them.

**Part I:** The first part delves into the application of FL to IDS. After layout out the necessary background in Chapter 2, we present the state of the art in FIDS in Chapter 3. This chapter notably presents the results of our SLR on the topic, and focus on the related challenges and research opportunities. Chapter 4 then closes this first part by highlighting the main challenges in FIDS using toy examples.

Part II: The second part presents our contributions to quantifying the limitations of FIDS. Chapter 5 introduces a practical method to generate network topologies based on the composition of sub-topologies, and lays down the foundations for further studies on distributed networking analyses. Finally, Chapter 6 introduces our evaluation framework, and systematically analyses the impact of label-flipping attacks on FIDS.

Part III: The last part focuses on providing solutions to the challenges studied in Part II. Notably, Chapter 7 introduces a novel FL architecture for FIDS that handles malicious contributions in heterogeneous environments. Chapter 8 then makes a statement on the future of FIDS, with discussions about open issues and potential research directions.

#### 1.5 Publications

#### Journal articles

[Lav+22b] Léo Lavaur, Marc-Oliver Pahl, et al., « The Evolution of Federated Learning-based Intrusion Detection and Mitigation: A Survey », in: IEEE Transactions on Network and Service Management, Special Issue on Network Security Management (June 2022).

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- [Lav+ew] Léo Lavaur, Pierre-Marie Lechevalier, Yann Busnel, Romaric Ludinard, et al., « RADAR: Model Quality Assessment for Reputation-aware Collaborative Federated Learning », in: Under Review.
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- [LBA24b] Léo Lavaur, Yann Busnel, and Fabien Autrel, « Systematic Analysis of Label-flipping Attacks against Federated Learning in Collaborative Intrusion Detection Systems », in: Proceedings of the 19th International Conference on Availability, Reliability and Security (ARES), Workshop on Behavioral Authentication for System Security, Aug. 2024.

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# Federated Learning to build CIDSs

# **PRELIMINARIES**

## STATE OF THE ART

# THE EVOLUTION OF FEDERATED-LEARNING-BASED INTRUSION DETECTION AND MITIGATION

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#### 3.1 Introduction and Motivation

In the previous chapter, we introduced the concepts of intrusion detection system (IDS) and machine learning (ML), the challenges of deploying collaborative IDSs (CIDSs), and why federated learning (FL) is a promising solution to these challenges. This chapter's prime objective is to provide a comprehensive review of how FL can be leveraged for intrusion detection purposes, and shed light on the gaps in the literature that are discussed in this thesis.

A recent topic without identity Because of the novelty of FL in the field of IDS, the literature on the topic is still scarce. Only a handful of reviews [Ala+21; Agr+21; Cam+22] had been published on the topic when we stopped our data collection for this study in late 2021. While these papers provide a good overview of the existing works, they fail to provide synthesis and extract the core characteristics of the field. Notably, what makes FL for IDS different from FL for other applications, and what challenges are specific to the field of intrusion detection?

A systematic approach We aim to address this gap as thoroughly and transparently as possible, and leverage the systematic literature review (SLR) methodology to that end. This methodology [KC07] relies on a structured process to identify, select, and analyze the relevant literature on a given topic. With explicitly defined research questions and

inclusion/exclusion criteria, the SLR methodology ensures that the review is reproducible and unbiased. Therefore, we intend to provide a comprehensive overview of the existing literature, and reproducible, evidence-based conclusions on the specificities of FL for IDS.

Content The content of this chapter is based on our survey published in TNSM in May 2022 [Lav+22b] and its accompanying extension at the C&ESAR conference in November 2022 [Lav+22a]. Because the initial paper was submitted in November 2021, the quantitative analysis has been updated during the writing of this manuscript to include the latest publications on the topic. The qualitative analysis has also completed to a lesser extent.

#### Contributions of this chapter

- The first SLR on the use of FL for IDS, including qualitative and quantitative analyses of the literature.
- A generalization of the selected works as a reference architecture for FIDSs, providing a starting point for future works on the topic.
- A taxonomy synthesizing the state of the art of FIDS, providing a framework to analyze and compare existing and upcoming literature.
- The identification of the main challenges and opportunities in the field, and a set of research directions to address them.

## 3.2 Methodology

This section details the methodology applied to review the state of the art of FIDSs. The original article follows the SLR methodology introduced to the engineering field by Kitchenham et al. [KC07]. SLR uses analytical methods to answer research questions about the literature on a specific topic. The update to the original article is less structured and more focused on the evolution of the field, so the methodology is adapted accordingly.

#### 3.2.1 Research Questions

The SLR methodology recommends defining explicit research questions to structure the review and the selection of papers. This survey aims at evaluating FIDS and their maturity, as well as their core components, and relevant variations. Therefore, using related and selected works, we identify the following research questions (RQs) that cover the topic of FIDSs:

#### 1) What are FIDS?

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Figure 3.1 – Search and selection processes

- **RQ 1.1.** What challenges do FIDS help to cope with?
- **RQ 1.2.** Which techniques exist to federate ML-based detection and mitigation mechanisms?
- 2) What are the differences between of FIDS?
  - **RQ 2.1.** What are the key components of FIDS? How do they influence the system's performance?
  - RQ 2.2. Which metrics are used to measure and compare FIDS?
- 3) What is the state of the art of FIDS?
  - RQ 3.1. What are the topics covered by the academic literature since 2016?
  - **RQ 3.2.** Where was the literatures published? Which research groups and communities are active in this area?
  - **RQ 3.3.** What are open questions according to existing works?

#### 3.2.2 Search and Selection Process

Figure 3.1 presents the methodology and its search, selection, and synthesis processes. In yellow are represented the sources of papers, in green the final selection, and in gray

the processing steps of the methodology. The tools used in the *Structured search* are represented with search engines in purple, and online databases in blue.

The searching of relevant literature involves four sources: recommendations, intuitive search, structured search, and snowballing.

- (1) Recommendations were given by supervisors and coworkers throughout the realization of this work. This initial set of relevant papers is also used as a source of snowballing for further searching. Moreover, we included references from an aborted survey on Collaborative security approaches, which already yielded a substantial amount of literature by using the same methods.
- (2) *Intuitive search* has been performed at the beginning of the survey to get a first grasp on the topic, and to learn about the functioning of FIDSs. At first, mostly Google Scholar has been used.
- (3) Structured search has been adopted afterward, following the principles of SLR [KC07]. Different search engines and online databases are used for he sake of completeness, as illustrated in ??. Databases can provide different results depending on their ownership. Search engine results differ according to the way requests are parsed, and the papers they have indexed. Thus, multiple sources provide more exhaustive results.

  (a) application of FL to IDSs, and (b) literature addressing the topic of FIDS with unusual keywords.
  - (a) ("federated learning" OR "fl" OR "federated") AND ("intrusion detection systems" OR "ids")
  - (b) ("federated" OR "collaborative") AND ("detection" OR "defense" OR "mitigation")
- (4) Snowballing identifies relevant works that would have been missed otherwise, such as publications cited by articles of our selected corpus, or papers that refer to them. The related surveys identified in this work (Section 3.6) contain a lot of references to technical articles, making them relevant for snowballing. Furthermore, as this survey proceeds with quantitative analysis of the venues and groups (Section 3.3), it provides extended snowballing opportunities by looking at other publications in the most represented venues or research groups in the selected corpus.

Approximately two hundred papers have been identified. Duplicate removal is performed with Zotero which allows identifying and merging redundant items. The selection then happens in two phases. Firstly, the title and abstract are used to discriminate *out-of-scope* papers in Phase I, along with their number of citations given the search engines, and age. However, a paper with few citations, but interesting abstract, probably only lacks visibility. Thus, it is moved to Phase II, which consists of a more thorough analysis of the selected works, using the *three-pass* approach defined by Keshav [Kes07].

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Figure 3.2 – Updated selection process.

After the two selection phases, 22 papers were selected, excluding the 18 initial surveys seen in Section 3.6. All present technical solution for FIDS. The challenges identified in Chapter 2 were also used to either search or select papers, mostly through the *intuitive* search part.

#### 3.2.3 Data Extraction and Analysis

The quantitative section of the original paper was solely based on the 22 selected papers. However, a significant amount of literature has been published since the initial survey. Therefore, we updated the quantitative analysis to include the latest publications on the topic. The qualitative analysis has also been completed to a lesser extent, just enough to provide a general overview of the field's evolution.

### 3.3 Quantitative Analysis

- 3.3.1 Evolution of the Topic
- 3.3.2 Relevant Venues
- 3.3.3 Active Groups
- 3.3.4 Topics of Interest

## 3.4 Qualitative Analysis

#### 3.4.1 Structuring the Literature

#### 3.4.2 Federated Learning for Intrusion Detection

Data Source and Type

Preprocessing

Algorithm location

Algorithm Type

Defense Mechanism

Federation Strategy

Communication

FL Type

Aggregation Strategy

Model Target

**Analyzed Dataset** 

Costs and Metrics

#### 3.5 Discussion

#### 3.5.1 Limitations of this Study

## 3.5.2 Open Issues and Future Directions

#### 3.6 Related Work

At the time of writing this literature review, the literature on FL for IDS was still scarce. Only a handful of reviews had been published on the topic [Ala+21; Agr+21;

Table 3.1 – Related literature reviews, their topics, contributions, and number of citations according to Google Scholar (Apr. 2024). Works marked \* were originally available as preprints, and were only published afterward. Works marked  $\ddagger$  are added for the sake of completeness, but were not included in the initial selection.

Domain	Year	Authors	Contributions	Cited	Ref.
Cocurity	2016	Skopik et al.	• 0 0 0 0 • 0	291	[SSF16]
Security information	2018	Tounsi et al.	$\bullet$ $\bullet$ $\circ$ $\circ$ $\bullet$ $\circ$	448	[TR18]
	2019	Wagner et al.	$\bullet$ $\bullet$ $\circ$ $\circ$ $\bullet$ $\circ$	240	[Wag+19]
sharing	2019	Pala et al.	$\bullet$ $\bullet$ $\circ$ $\bullet$ $\circ$	63	[PZ19]
ML for	2016	Buczak et al.	• 0 0 0 0 0	3105	[BG16]
intrusion	2018	Meng et al.	• 0 0 0 0 • 0	562	[Men+18]
detection	2019	Chaabouni et al.	$\bullet$ $\circ$ $\bullet$ $\circ$ $\circ$ $\bullet$ $\circ$	790	[Cha+19]
detection	2019	da Costa et al.	• 0 0 0 0 • 0	492	[dCos+19]
Collaborative	2010	Zhou et al.	• 0 0 0 0 • 0	517	[ZLK10]
detection	2015	Vasilomanolakis et al.	$\bullet$ $\circ$ $\bullet$ $\circ$ $\circ$ $\bullet$	379	[VKF15]
	2020	Aledhari et al.	• 0 0 0 0 0 0	517	[Ale+20]
Federated	2020	Lyu et al.	• 0 0 0 0 • 0	* 436	[LYY20]
learning	2020	Shen et al.	• 0 0 0 0 • 0	69	[She+20]
learning	2021	Mothukuri et al.	$\bullet$ $\circ$ $\bullet$ $\circ$ $\circ$ $\bullet$	376	[Mot+21a]
	2021	Lo et al.	• • 0 0 0 • •	158	[Lo+21]
	2021	Agrawal et al.	• 0 0 0 0 • 0	* 142	[Agr+21]
FL for intrusion	2021	Alazab et al.	• 0 0 0 0 • 0	158	[Ala+21]
detection	2021	Campos et al.	$\bullet$ 0 0 0 $\bullet$ $\bullet$ 0	* 123	[Cam+22]
	2022	Lavaur et al.	$\bullet$ $\bullet$ $\bullet$ $\circ$ $\bullet$	22	[Lav+22b]
	2022	Fedorchenko et al. ‡	0 0 0 0 0 0	22	[FNS22]
	2022	Ghimire et al. ‡	• 0 0 0 0 • 0	208	[GR22]
	2024	Isma'ila et al. ‡	$\bullet$ $\bullet$ $\circ$ $\circ$ $\bullet$ $\bullet$	0	[Ism+24]

ullet covers topic; ullet partly addresses topic; ullet does not cover topic.

Cam+22]. Therefore, we extended our search of related works to related topics that were susceptible to share similar challenges or conclusions. This extended selection can be divided into three main categories: (a) security information sharing, (b) intrusion detection, and (c) collaborative ML. Table 3.1 provides a summary of this selection, grouped by topic and sorted by publication date. In addition to the initial selection, we also included more recent surveys on the topic [FNS22; GR22; Ism+24], whose number highlights the massive interest in the community.

Common issues of collaborative systems, such as the need for trust, privacy, and security, can also apply to FL-based collaboration systems. Therefore, we include four surveys [SSF16; TR18; Wag+19; PZ19] where the authors discuss the challenges and opportunities of sharing security-related information. They highlight the need for stan-

dardization, automation, and incentives, to achieve efficient and effective collaboration. The topic of trust is a clearly identified challenge in these works [Wag19; TR18]. The present study rather focuses on FL as a technical mean for collaboration, but such as trust or incentives are also relevant in this context.

Because ML-based IDS can be considered as a key component of FIDS, we review existing surveys on the topic [BG16; Men+18; Cha+19; dCos+19]. These work cover a wide range of solutions, from traditional ML (support vector machine (SVM), decision tree (DT) and random forest (RF), among others) to more recent approaches, such as deep learning, the latter being overrepresented in the literature of FIDSs. They also provide a good overview of the existing datasets and evaluation metrics, which can be useful for the evaluation of FL-based IDS. However, as noted in Section 3.5.2, typical IDS datasets present limitations that can hinder the evaluation of FL-based IDS.

FL is obviously another critical aspect of FIDSs. Consequently, related works include surveys on the collaborative aspects of ML (b) and FL [Ale+20; Lo+21]. They discuss FL approaches to work with distributed architectures. The security of FL is also heavily reviewed by [She+20; LYY20; Mot+21b]. They identify security threats like communication bottleneck, poisoning, and distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks, that could endanger FL-based systems. While the IDS use case can be seen as an application of FL, we argue that it raises specific concerns in terms of privacy, latency, and adaptability.

Zhou et al. [ZLK10] and Vasilomanolakis et al. [VKF15] survey the evolution of collaborative IDS (CIDS)—at the merge of intrusion detection (b) and collaborative ML (c). Their works are however older and thus, cannot offer a comprehensive view of CIDS, as FL-based approaches did not exist at the time of their writing. Hence, the authors focus on collaboration in the sense of detection+correlation, whereas the analysis presented in this chapter (Section 3.4) surveys the use of FL in IDSs.

Finally, recent work have reviewed the use of FL for intrusion detection [Agr+21; Cam+22; Ala+21]. Alazab et al. [Ala+21] address the wider topic of FL for cybersecurity, which only includes intrusion detection as an application. Their paper is explanatory and provides an overview of FL applications in information security. Like this work, Agrawal et al. [Agr+21] focus on FIDSs, but have different methodology. The authors list existing FIDSs and detail their approaches, and identify open issues. On the other hand, Campos et al. [Cam+22] review a subset of FIDSs by focusing on IoT use case, and the impact of non-IID (independent and identically distributed) data on performance. While all identify challenges and research directions, this work also performs quantitative (Section 3.3) and qualitative (Section 3.4) analyses of existing FIDSs, and extracts reference architecture and taxonomy. The existence of these papers emphasizes the importance and relevance of FIDSs for the research community.

The more recent works on the topic [FNS22; GR22; Ism+24] confirm these observations. The work of Fedorchenko et al. is of little interest, as it only lists and details

existing works with close to no added value. Ghimire et al. [GR22] provide a more convincing study, closer to the method applied by Alazab et al. [Ala+21], but with a focus on the IoT. Finally, Isma'ila et al. [Ism+24] provide a comprehensive review, with up-to-date literature leveraging the SLR methodology, but still focuses on the IoT.

## 3.7 Conclusion

#### Part II

# Quantifying the Limitations of FIDSs

## Part III

# **Providing Solutions**

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# **APPENDICES**

A Résumé en français de la thèse





Titre: titre (en français).....

Mot clés : de 3 à 6 mots clefs

**Résumé**: Eius populus ab incunabulis primis ad usque pueritiae tempus extremum, quod annis circumcluditur fere trecentis, circummurana pertulit bella, deinde aetatem ingressus adultam post multiplices bellorum aerumnas Alpes transcendit et fretum, in iuvenem erectus et virum ex omni plaga quam orbis ambit inmensus, reportavit laureas et triumphos, iamque vergens in senium et nomine solo aliquotiens vincens ad tranquilliora vitae discessit. Hoc inmaturo interitu ipse quoque sui pertaesus excessit e vita aetatis nono anno atque vicensimo cum quadriennio imperasset. natus apud Tuscos in Massa Veternensi, patre Constantio Constantini fratre imperatoris, matreque Galla. Thalassius vero

ea tempestate praefectus praetorio praesens ipse quoque adrogantis ingenii, considerans incitationem eius ad multorum augeri discrimina, non maturitate vel consiliis mitigabat, ut aliquotiens celsae potestates iras principum molliverunt, sed adversando iurgandoque cum parum congrueret, eum ad rabiem potius evibrabat, Augustum actus eius exaggerando creberrime docens, idque, incertum qua mente, ne lateret adfectans, quibus mox Caesar acrius efferatus, velut contumaciae quoddam vexillum altius erigens, sine respectu salutis alienae vel suae ad vertenda opposita instar rapidi fluminis irrevocabili impetu ferebatur. Hae duae provinciae bello quondam piratico catervis mixtae praedonum.

Title: titre (en anglais).....

Keywords: de 3 à 6 mots clefs

**Abstract:** Eius populus ab incunabulis primis ad usque pueritiae tempus extremum, quod annis circumcluditur fere trecentis, circummurana pertulit bella, deinde aetatem ingressus adultam post multiplices bellorum aerumnas Alpes transcendit et fretum, in iuvenem erectus et virum ex omni plaga quam orbis ambit inmensus, reportavit laureas et triumphos, iamque vergens in senium et nomine solo aliquotiens vincens ad tranquilliora vitae discessit. Hoc inmaturo interitu ipse quoque sui pertaesus excessit e vita aetatis nono anno atque vicensimo cum quadriennio imperasset. natus apud Tuscos in Massa Veternensi, patre Constantio Constantini fratre imperatoris, matreque Galla. Thalassius vero

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