Restricting Access to Control Panel via GPO

Environment: Windows Server 2022 (DC), Windows Enterprise Clients

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Objective

Prevent all users in the organization from accessing the **Control Panel** and **PC Settings**, to enforce IT policies and avoid unauthorized configuration changes.

Technology Stack

- Group Policy via Windows Server 2022
- Windows 10/11 Enterprise (Domain-Joined Clients)
- GPMC (Group Policy Management Console)

Steps to Implement

1. Create a GPO

- Open Group Policy Management Console
- Right-click the domain root (e.g.,`kali.local`) → **Create a GPO in this domain and link it here**
- Name: `Restrict Control Panel`

2. Edit the GPO

- Right-click on `Restrict Control Panel` → Click **Edit**

3. Navigate to Policy Path

```
User Configuration → Policies → Administrative Templates → Control Panel
```

4. Enable the Policy

- Find and double-click: **Prohibit access to Control Panel and PC settings**
- Set to: **Enabled**
- Click **Apply**, then **OK**

📊 Configuration Summary

Setting Name	Value
GPO Name	Restrict Control Panel
Scope	User Configuration
Setting Path	Admin Templates > Control Panel
Policy Enabled	Yes
Enforced	Yes
Affects	Control Panel + PC Settings

Real-World Use Case

This policy prevents users from:

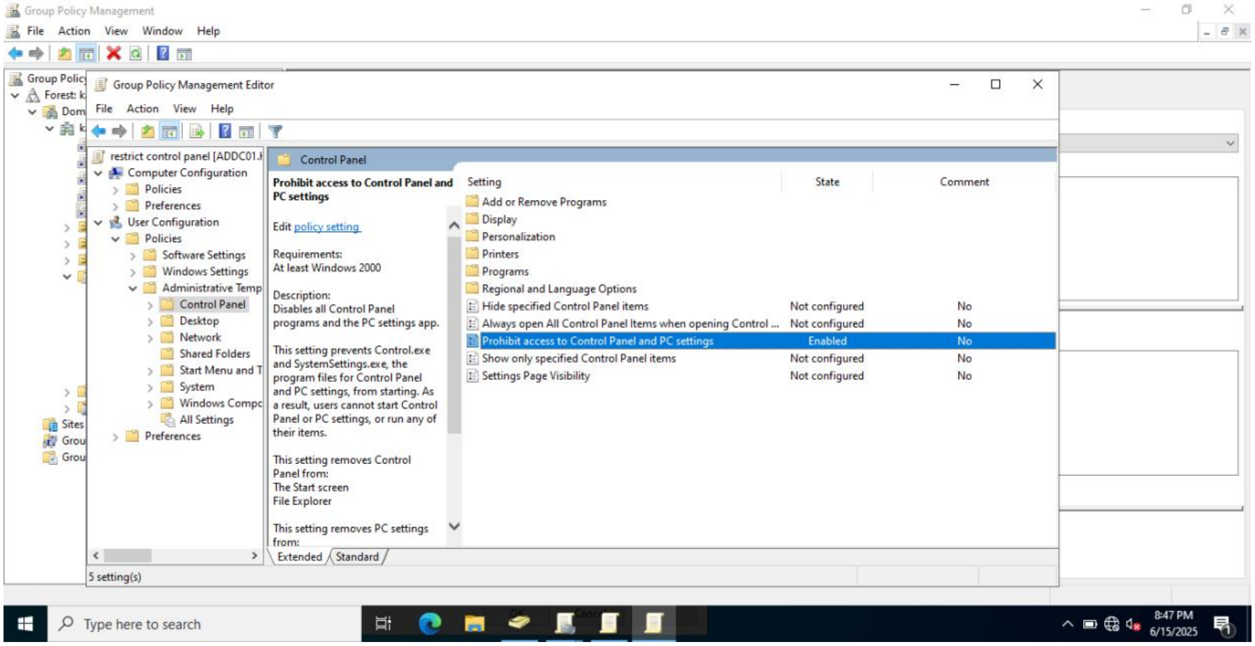
- Modifying network, display, or device settings
- Disabling services or firewall settings
- Accessing System Restore or uninstall tools
  Which helps secure machines, reduces misconfigurations, and supports compliance.

Skills Demonstrated

- User-targeted GPO design
- Security enforcement via Administrative Templates
- Centralized desktop lockdown
- Prevention of user-side misconfigurations

Final Notes

- This policy is useful in **corporate, school, and healthcare** environments
- Combine this with **USB policy restrictions** for tighter control
- Best paired with **desktop wallpaper and drive-mapping policies** for full standardization



Prohibit access to Control Panel and PC settings

Edit policy setting

Requirements:
At least Windows 2000

Description:
Disables all Control Panel programs and the PC settings app.

This setting prevents Control.exe and SystemSettings.exe, the program files for Control Panel and PC settings, from starting. As a result, users cannot start Control Panel or PC settings, or run any of their items.

This setting removes Control Panel from:
The Start screen
File Explorer

This setting removes PC settings from:

Setting	State	Comment
Add or Remove Programs		
Display		
Personalization		
Printers		
Programs		
Regional and Language Options		
Hide specified Control Panel items	Not configured	No
Always open All Control Panel Items when opening Control ...	Not configured	No
Prohibit access to Control Panel and PC settings	Enabled	No
Show only specified Control Panel items	Not configured	No
Settings Page Visibility	Not configured	No