

Technical and Military Strategies of Cyberwarfare and Its Role in International Relations

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Abstract

The increasing incidents of cyberwarfare, particularly from groups linked to organized crime in countries like Russia and China, shows the evolving nature of cyber threats. It becomes evident that achieving absolute cyber security is impossible; the current strategy making attacks less lucrative and making breach detection easy. There are several methods used to secure IT systems. Passwords, especially complex ones, often serve as a primary line of defense against unauthorized access. Passwords are however not foolproof and can be compromised. In this work, we will be taking a look at the intricacies and vulnerabilities associated with password security, highlighting the potential risks associated with overdependence on them and the place of multi-factor authentication in cyber-security as well as the issues associated with weak Wi-Fi security in houses and businesses, along with vulnerabilities in popular messaging platforms.

This work also explores the various kinds of hackers, emphasizing the differences between skilled professionals, security specialists, and others commonly mislabeled by the media.

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1. Introduction

Let us take a look at Péter. Péter's main business communications are hosted by a free mailbox service named Gerda. For security reasons [1], he updates his password frequently, which is currently set as 'Solyom17'.

To protect important information about his business, Péter uses another free mailbox provider, Fancom, for his lower-priority correspondence such as notifications from various social media platforms and newsletters[52]. It is a well known fact that Fancom's security measures are not the best. However, Péter password for this account, 'Szalonka28', is different from the one he uses for Gerda. Therefore, even if Fancom were to be compromised, the security of his primary business correspondence on Gerda remains undisturbed [57].

Fancom, with its questionable reputation, recently experienced yet another security breach. The hacker involved in this breach demonstrated a large amount of technical prowess. True to the nature of many skilled hackers, they opted for discretion, choosing not to boast about their success [47].

1.1 Identifying the Issue

While Péter's passwords for his correspondences were different on both platforms, ensuring his safety despite the security breach at Fancom, issues like these remain common in today's digital age [52].

This essay delves into these security concerns and other related issues. We will examine potential vulnerabilities in Péter's company as a case study, while simultaneously taking a closer look at the general limitations of password-based security and explore methods for enhancing authentication protocols in computer systems.

Also, we will provide clarity on the term 'hacker,' exploring the ethical implications surrounding the diverse subcultures surrounding this term. We will evaluate the interpersonal dynamics among these subcultures, explore the typical personality profile of hackers, and analyze their social positioning. As we venture to understand the hacker's mindset, we will also outline several techniques employed by hackers. These techniques are often used to attack certain individuals, and are often used as bargaining chips during international conflicts.

1.2 Inconspicuous Risk of Breaches by Entering the Wrong Password

Now, let us look into a potential security issue that exists in our previous example.

Fancom only detected the security breach six months after the incident. Before this detection, the hacker discreetly integrated a software into Fancom's login interface, capturing every password attempt before relaying it to Fancom's actual system. As a result, even if the password is correct, the user's login process remains seamless and unaffected [52][47].

Take note of this key point: the hacker's software records all attempts, including the incorrect ones.

In the case of Péter; faced with a demanding work schedule, at some point, Péter was able to only engage with his work emails, with no time to spare for newsletters or social media notifications. As his workload eases, he decides to check his secondary email account. Upon reaching Fancom's login page, he correctly enters his username. But when prompted for his password, he immediately types in "Solyom17", the password for Gerda. As Fancom signals that the password is the wrong one, Péter, in a moment of confusion, wonders, "What was my password again?" He goes on to make several attempts, cycling through the various passwords he could recall. After some trial and error, he eventually inputs the right one, gaining access to the Fancom platform.

If the hacker is interested in extracting information about Péter's company, all he has to do is identify the service provider managing Péter's corporate communications [56]. Given that the hacker has accessed all of Péter's passwords from a single compromised system, the potential for data breach multiplies.

The greatest risk linked to passwords is our reliance on this static sequence of characters for identification [1]. Even if users vary their passwords across platforms or routinely update their most critical passwords, a breach in one system can jeopardize the integrity of their identity across all platforms.

Hackers, fully aware of this vulnerability and expertly exploiting it, often maintain databases packed with peoples' data: email addresses, names of the hacked systems, usernames, passwords, and even unsuccessful password attempts. Over time, these databases may contain extensive user data from multiple systems, granting a highly skilled hacker the power to potentially compromise user's accounts even on platforms that are not yet under their control.

This remains the largely unspoken but significant threat of password-based security.

Once again, the greatest risk associated with passwords is therefore: The overreliance on a consistent string of characters for the identification of our identities and the security of our systems. While this string of characters may vary between platforms, users may regularly update the passwords of their most important accounts, believing they've ensured their security, which is misleading[53].

2. Understanding Passwords

For people who engage with information technology (IT) and cybersecurity on a superficial level, the term "password" is often equated with foolproof protection. The common perception is that once a file, system, or device is "password-protected", it becomes impenetrable enough to be resistant to unauthorized access [52]. But is this really the case? Let's dig deeper into this notion to answer this question.

When we use a password, we are basically relying on a sequence of characters, which a person can recall from memory, to safeguard our IT systems. The very nature of a memorized password means it can be shared, written down, or even coerced out of someone, even in cases where the person involved had no initial plan of doing so. In other words, passwords could be disclosed unintentionally [1].

Even if none of these situations arise, using passwords alone is an unreliable method of securing data. For robust protection, passwords must be supplemented with other security measures. However, people around the world continue to rely solely on passwords to secure their systems and devices, oblivious to the immense risk this poses for them, their companies and organizations if their data falls into malicious hands [11].

In Hungary, a notable security breach related to passwords occurred towards the end of the second millennium. This breach led to the exposure of the encrypted passwords of over 33,000 average Hungarian users, to both security professionals and hackers alike. An attached list in the originally published version of this essay provides a glimpse of the 2,000 most common passwords from this breach. A noteworthy observation is that most commonly used passwords often consisted of Hungarian first names (e.g., *tamas*, *andras*), nicknames (like *laci*, *apucci*), and commonplace nouns in both English and Hungarian (e.g., *almafa*, *szerda*, *buda*). Other times, these passwords either mirrored the username or were variations of the user's actual name, (e.g., *zsuzsanna / kiss*) or were identical to the username (e.g., *gszabo / gszabo*).

2.1.1 Avoiding a “bad” password

An effective password should not be similar to the username [12]. It should not contain proper nouns or names of animals, repetitive sequences of characters, names of friends, family, or acquaintances [62], sequences found on the standard QWERTY keyboard, vehicle registration numbers, contact details, such as office, home, or mobile phone numbers [59], names of public figures or celebrities, swear words, common words in any language, whether they are verbs, nouns, or otherwise, personal details or birthdates of any person, real or fictional [21], or distorted versions of any of the above, such as words with numbers inserted or written in reverse.

Examples of subpar passwords from the abovementioned breach include those padded with simple numbers (like “anyu1”), those where letters are swapped with numbers (as in “b0r1ska”), and redundant words (such as “macimaci”).

Apart from these examples, there are numerous ways a password can be weak and vulnerable. For a more detailed list of weak password examples, refer to the provided attachment.

2.1.2 Characteristics of a Strong Password

For a password to be considered “good” it should meet the following criteria.

According to guidelines from the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) [49], a good password should ideally be between 12-14 characters, but at a minimum, 8 characters in length, containing a mix of numbers,

lowercase letters, uppercase letters, and special characters (e.g., !@#\$%^&*). It should feature no more than one consecutively repeated character and should not have the same character repeated three times in a row. This ensures that those attempting "shoulder surfing" (observing someone as they input their password) will find it challenging to mimic your entry.

For instance, the password "hR#2!iie\$*_?f" is potent. It seamlessly integrates lowercase and uppercase letters, numbers, and special characters. Such complexity means that potential attackers would have to navigate through an expansive character set to decipher the password [24]. This drawback with intricate combinations that make up this password is the difficulty in recalling them, which may tempt users to write them down. If a person is able to memorize 4-5 such character strings and their minor variations to memory, they can equip themselves with relatively secure passwords for some years [22]. Techniques to aid recall can include creating logical connections between characters, thus making any sequence more memorable.

From information provided above, even those who are not versed in cybersecurity can discern that while passwords might not be the most suitable means of digital data protection or identification, when forced to use them, selecting a secure password is vital [21]. The stakes are high during potential breaches, and a lot can depend on the strength of a single password.

2.1.3 How Much Time Does It Really Take?

A "brute force attack" refers to the method in which an attacker systematically attempts every possible combination for a password, cycling through options like a-z, A-Z, 0-9, and so forth [51].

The length of a password, as well as its complexity, plays a critical role in its security. According to Weir and Agarwal [58], the difference between a 7-character and an 8-character password, especially when considering the variety of character sets used, is substantial. This is because each additional character added to a password augments the required computational power and time for cracking not just linearly, but exponentially.

For instance, based on the table provided in the appendix, there's an astonishing 193-year difference in crack time between the passwords "szandi1" and "sZ4nD!1." when using a brute force method that tries 1,000,000 passwords per second. However, it's worth mentioning that even the latter password isn't ideal, given its resemblance to a personal name.

2.2 Addressing Password Vulnerability: Multi-Factor Authentication

At the root of password issues, like many aspects in IT, lies an inherent flaw within the method itself [1].

Authentication methods that consider multiple factors during the identification process tend to be more secure. These factors can be categorized into knowledge-based, possession-based, and biometric-based authentication techniques [33]. An example of this is when using online banking services. After a user successfully inputs their

username and password (knowledge-based), they further validate their identity using a one-time password sent to their mobile phone (possession-based) [14].

2.2.1 Understanding the Concept of a 'Key'

In simple terms, key identification involves using multiple random character sequences for identification. The length of these sequences is typically a power of 2, ranging usually between 128 and 2048 characters.

To shed some light with statistics: Attempting to decipher all potential values of a 128-bit symmetric key pair (via a brute force attack) would require trying out the 2^{128} possibilities. This translates to an astonishing 340,282,366,920,938,463,463,374,607,431,768,211,456 potential combinations. Should a device have the capacity to verify a quintillion (10^{18}) possibilities every second, it would still take approximately 10^{13} years to exhaust all combinations. That duration is a thousandfold longer than the estimated age of the universe, which is about 13 billion years [42].

Based on the present understanding of physics and the Von Neumann-Landauer Limit, which relates computing capacity to energy demand, achieving such a task with current IT resources is virtually impossible [4].

2.2.2 Simplifying the Concept

Key pair identification methods are already prevalent in the IT systems of most top businesses. These systems, in addition to passwords, utilize knowledge and possession-based identification, paired with private and public key sets [7]. One reason this method has not been universally adopted is due to its sophisticated IT infrastructure demands and the added complexity in communication, especially when users are given tokens to store their private keys [13].

However, this solution does not necessarily have to be complex in terms of communication or IT framework. A feasible approach for a company handling sensitive data would be to establish a central authentication server. This server would execute dual-factor identification (possibly utilizing a key pair, token, or even mobile phone combined with SMS verification) and, upon successful identification, could grant access to various subsystems that previously only required a password [5].

By employing this strategy, it's possible to greatly mitigate the risks associated with password theft in the long run. Also, it would greatly reduce the potential breaches of other systems using stolen passwords, given the reduced likelihood of a hacker simultaneously accessing a user's mobile device after compromising the system [35].

3. Who is a 'Hacker'?

The term "hacker" is frequently used across various media outlets, but its interpretation can differ significantly based on the media's level of expertise on the subject [44]. This difference in definition often leads to intense discussions

between IT professionals and those who only occasionally interact with IT systems. It usually stems from the media's tendency to spotlight only a specific subset of hacker activities that are deemed newsworthy [55]. Due to this, the media has often associated the term – much to the displeasure of the professional community – with this subset in a negative light [44].

So, let's explore the diverse meanings of the term 'hacker'.

3.1 Terminology by Professional Communities

Hackers

1. Highly Skilled IT Professionals: These are individuals with exceptional technical expertise, often software developers and avid advocates of open-source systems (Levy, 1984). They possess a depth of understanding of IT systems that are way ahead of those of typical system administrators and software developers. They often contribute to key foundational protocols, such as Request for Comments (RFCs), that shape the Internet and the world of information technology in general.
2. Security Specialists: This subset consists of experts with specialized knowledge in bypassing IT security systems. Within this group, distinctions are made between Blackhat hackers, who engage in illegal activities like unauthorized access and data theft, and Whitehat hackers, who work on developing and improving security and counterintelligence technology; and Greyhat hackers, who operate without a clear moral compass, engaging in activities that may be both beneficial and harmful [34].

Crackers

1. A community of individuals focused on the illegal manipulation and "hacking" of software.
2. For the group defined in point (1) under the term 'Hacker,' being lumped under the same umbrella with the community that deals with security technology is often considered derogatory. This perception complicates the terminology further because they cynically employ the term 'Cracker' as a generalization for both hackers as defined in point (2) and script kids. This usage muddies the understanding of these different groups in media representations and broader community discussions.

Script Kids

A "script kid" refers to a novice hacker or IT enthusiast who possesses limited technical expertise. They typically engage in hacking websites or systems, and stealing information either for profit, amusement, or even unjustified harm. Often, their methods are derived from resources published by whitehat hackers, and they frequently employ these tactics without a comprehensive understanding of the technologies involved.

3.2 The Media's Take on Terminology

When the media employs the term "hacker", it's frequently in reference to "script kiddies", thereby overlooking other hacking subcultures.

Also, the use of "cracker" by the media usually refers to the activities of the group from the first point in the hacker definition (IT professionals). This has sparked confusion and drawn criticism from hackers who resonate more with the second definition (Security specialists).

3.3 Understanding Corporate Hackers

Beyond the classifications we've touched upon, there's a notable segment in the hacking community: those employed by major corporations as security experts.

A large number of hackers eventually find themselves working for these large corporations. They may work as either technical specialists - also called ethical hackers or penetration testers, who probe systems for vulnerabilities, or as security auditors, who review processes and evaluate information security from a holistic perspective [52].

While formal certifications like CEH (Certified Ethical Hacker) do exist, many corporate hackers come from a self-taught background. Learning the tools and techniques is achievable through literature, but the intrinsic hacker mindset is more innate than learned [15].

3.4 The Reality

In this disagreement on the right term to use when referring to each group, it's challenging to find a middle ground since each side typically believes they're right. One main factor that can help differentiate between these groups is whether their members participate in illegal activities [34].

The main issue lies in the fact that the media use 'hacker', 'cracker', and 'script-kid' interchangeably, painting them all as criminals. This perception upsets the hacker(1) group as they strictly abstain from criminal acts. Meanwhile, hacker(2) individuals identify themselves based on moral principles, further subdividing into various factions, as seen in the appendix [52].

For clarity, moving forward, the term 'hacker', will be used to refer to those from the black hat and grey hat segments of the hacker(2) definition, a group predominantly made up of technically skilled young males, ranging from 16 to 28, some of whom lean towards criminal behavior [34].

4. Worldwide Threats: Precision Strikes on Targets

This chapter highlights various strategies employed by hackers, intelligence officers, and private investigators to gather data on their target individuals or entities. Fortunately, by being careful of the information they disclose and ensuring that their infrastructure is protected, most people protect themselves from many of these techniques. We will also be delving into some powerful tactics that are used to target an entire country and their infrastructure, with some experts viewing them as modern instruments of warfare or digital diplomacy.

4.1 Wi-Fi Security Challenges

Wi-Fi security, especially with regards to encryption of wireless internet, poses some interesting challenges [52]. From recent studies, it's startling to note that 20% of homes with internet connectivity are using Wi-Fi routers that remain in their default configuration settings of ADSL or cable Internet access [48], so that access with a laptop or PC is more convenient and free of wires.

This implies that these households prioritize the convenience of wireless over the security of a wired connection. Such an approach allows potential malicious attackers to merely drive around urban areas and effortlessly check the encryption status of Wi-Fi signals. When they locate unprotected or weakly protected networks, these hackers can operate under the identity of the unsuspecting subscriber. If executed skillfully, their online activities can remain almost entirely concealed.

Surprisingly, even establishments which employ professionally trained system administrators are not immune. A simple stroll with a laptop around many corporate buildings reveals Wi-Fi networks either unprotected or secured with weak passwords or a weak encryption protocol. These vulnerabilities offer easy access to internal documents, databases, and drives that are supposedly safeguarded by the internal network.

It's important to note that merely password-protecting company Wi-Fi, irrespective of password length, is insufficient. Employing key-based or multi-factor authentication methods are indispensable for safeguarding internal networks [52].

4.2 Understanding Instant Messaging (IM) Security

Platforms such as MSN, ICQ, and gtalk are part of the growing realm of Instant Messaging, allowing instant communication among users. However, this convenience masks an overlooked vulnerability. Many unknowingly share private or business details without realizing the potential security risks that poses for them and their business [37]. Skype stands alone in offering true encryption, but this too isn't foolproof. There are concerns:

To start, Skype conversations are relatively secure if attackers haven't accessed the host computer. But the secrecy behind Skype's encryption raises eyebrows, as it's speculated that United States authorities, and by extension

possibly others, have ways to decode it [17]. Another overlooked detail is Skype's default setting to store messages in text, an appealing target for cyber-attacks [16].

Platforms like ICQ, MSN, gtalk, and even Facebook chat come with their own baggage: they aren't encrypted from the get-go. So, any chat on an unencrypted connection, be it at a café or an unprotected home Wi-Fi, puts both user credentials and conversation history at risk [61].

4.3 The World of Community Portals

Starting in 2007, there has been a surge in social networking sites [23] and other websites where users mainly engage with content uploaded by their peers. On these platforms, individuals create personal profiles and openly share information about themselves.

These platforms offer a treasure trove of information for hackers and business intelligence specialists alike [30]. When you include data from several social media sites with other client-supplied databases and research methods, it becomes possible to glean comprehensive insights about almost anyone. The irony of this is that most users willingly share this information, often overlooking two main issues that can arise from this oversharing. The first being that the shared data might be accessed by more than just their immediate social circle [39] while the second is that, when data from different sites is collated, it offers more than just personal details and contacts; it paints a detailed picture of the individual's mindset and personality profile [27]. A skilled analyst can use this composite data to infer a person's routines and behavioral traits. Such information presents several vulnerabilities, both personally and organizationally [27][30].

The risks of oversharing were highlighted by the website "pleaserobme.com," that was operational between late 2009 and early 2010 [20]. This platform emphasized how users who frequently disclose their physical locations unknowingly announce to potential burglars that their homes are unattended.

4.4 Ties Between Hackers and Organized Crime

It's becoming evident that certain blackhat groups, especially those within Russian and Chinese spheres, have ties to organized crime [54]. These hackers sometimes receive substantial amounts of money to launch specialized attacks on large companies and organizations, or even entire countries [43].

The main purpose of these attacks vary; from gaining confidential information and control to damaging an organization's IT infrastructure or even its reputation [8]. The repercussions of these attacks can be so severe that they can lead to great financial loss or worse, bankrupt the target [10].

There are several examples of such attacks. In many cases, the mere threat of an attack proves effective [2]. Russian organized crime outfits often employ a strategy where they first contact and reach an agreement with hackers that have substantial 'packet power' (a term indicating the potential magnitude of a Distributed Denial of Service, or DDoS, attack) (Kshetri, 2010). When the terms of their partnership is established, a representative from the criminal

group approaches potential targets (like major online platforms or businesses such as eBay, Amazon, or even online casinos) demanding "protection money" [45]. The financial implications for large-scale online businesses can be crippling, with just a day of downtime, resulting in losses amounting to millions [40][54]. The ease with which a DDoS attack can be initiated and sustained makes it a potent threat, which, given its potential scale, can even be seen as a weapon of war in international diplomatic conflicts [8].

4.5 The Cyber Standoff: Russia's Digital Offensive against Estonia

In 2007, Estonia, a small but digitally advanced nation, experienced a severe cyber attack from Russian hackers, displaying how devastating the power of DDoS attacks on a country's digital framework can be [18].

Estonia, home to 1.4 million people which include a large Russian minority, has an impressive digital infrastructure. About 60% of Estonians use the internet daily for tasks ranging from e-banking to fuel purchases [36]. Yet, the country's bandwidth is low. Even though its low bandwidth is sufficient for a country of its size, it places the country's digital infrastructure at great risk and vulnerable during cyber attacks [25].

Tensions rose when on April 27, 2007, Estonia relocated a Soviet war monument, which the Russian minority in Estonia deemed disrespectful, leading to street protests [19]. The situation was further inflamed by a fatality during these protests, which still did not change the mind of the Estonian government.

As relations with Moscow deteriorated due to these, Russian hackers attacked several high profile Estonian websites, including those of almost all ministries and economic organizations in the country, going as far as modifying the website of the liberal Reform Party of the Minister of Foreign Affairs [18].

The Estonian Ministry of Defense, while comparing this attack to those of 9/11, emphasized the severity of the attack. Russia on the other hand, escalated matters by imposing transport boycotts and calling for a change in Estonia's leadership [32].

This digital attack showcased the dangers of DDoS attacks in international relations, capable of overwhelming and isolating a country digitally [18].

Estonian officials were also bombarded with spam as their emails were published in various sites, a tactic though not as damaging as DDoS but is still disruptive. It wasn't until 2009 that Russia acknowledged its role in the attacks, tracing them back to Sergei Markov, a Kremlin associate [31].

The cyber assailants leveraged DDoS botnets and scripts from online forums, encouraging independent activists to use their personal internet bandwidths against Estonian assets. As a defense, Estonia blocked its bandwidth, momentarily disconnecting from the global internet [19].

4.6 The Era of Cyberwarfare: Understanding DDoS

Industrial grade servers, built to handle about 5,000-8,000 user requests every second, being overwhelmed by a tsunami of 10 million people demanding 20,000 requests per second. This is the reality of a DDoS attack, where vast networks of compromised computers, or botnets, target systems with a sea of seemingly genuine traffic, overloading and crippling them [46].

To demonstrate the growth in DDoS potency, consider this: in 2006, an attack with a bandwidth of 2-4 Gigabits was standard, with 8-gigabits seen as substantial [50]. By 2009, this intensity had surged to 50-60 gigabits.

The cyber attack on Estonia was not an isolated case. The world saw similar acts of digital aggression during events like the 2003 Iraq war, and following the fallout from the work of the Danish cartoonist about Muhammad, an attack on various news and political platforms. Others include those of April 2008, for political reasons, CNN.com and Radio Free Europe, in the fall of 2007, the website of the President of the Republic of Ukraine and the website of the Party of Regions, and in the summer of 2008, the website of NATO (presumably with the funding of Ukrainian anti-NATO protesters), the President of the Republic of Georgia, his website and the newspaper Democratic Voice of Burma were also attacked with DDoS for political reasons. These incidents underscore the evolving nature of global conflicts in the digital age.

5. Understanding Hackers: A Dive Into Their Psychology

Building on our previous discussions, a 'hacker' is identified as a skilled IT professional, with the majority being young men ranging from 16 to 28 years old, some of whom lean towards criminal behaviors [9].

This chapter is dedicated to offering a closer look at these individuals. We will focus on their mental framework and the motivations that propel them, helping you grasp the thought process of a hacker.

5.1 Hacker Motivations and Social Landscape

What does it mean for a hacker to have criminal tendencies? To understand this, it is important to explore the various underlying motivations of hackers. Why do hackers choose to hack? A prevalent sentiment in the hacker community is, "Why? Because we can!" [3]

This statement can be interpreted in several ways. To an outsider, this may sound like a bold declaration of power, capability and maybe arrogance. But those familiar with the hacker culture understand that this isn't the underlying psychology of most hackers, as the majority of hackers are very intelligent and possess deep technical know-how, with many of them being exceptionally reserved, introverted individuals.

They usually have communication issues that other people do not have to deal with, which often isolate them from mainstream society. Their world is often digital, and so are their social interactions. They are mostly self-taught and engage with like-minded peers, but these interactions rarely lead to real-world encounters.

It's a well-known fact that between 14 to 19 years of age is a phase of rebellion in personality development [60]. Just as young artists may use graffiti to express themselves, young male adults who are adept in the digital world, who spend much of their time in virtual realities, might use their exceptional skills during this rebellious phase in ways that can be considered misuse. This misuse can vary. Introverted personalities might be driven by a curiosity to access information that's typically out of reach, while more extroverted ones, or ones who would like to gain attention or feel powerful, might modify websites or digital platforms as a form of bragging, defiance, or asserting that power[28].

5.2 Understanding the Hacker's Thought Process

When hackers say, "Why? Because we can!", it's not just about showing off. It reflects their deep-seated curiosity and analytical skills. Consider a hypothetical conversation between a business leader and a hacker:

Hacker: "I did it because I could."

Executive: "What made you think you could?"

Hacker: "Your system isn't foolproof."

Executive: "How did you figure that out?"

Hacker: "I'm wired to spot imperfections."

Executive: "But why target these imperfections?"

Hacker: "It's like a puzzle for me. And often, there are valuable pieces of information hiding behind these flaws. I have a penchant for uncovering secrets."

Executive: "So, every system is breakable?"

Hacker: "In essence, yes. Every system has an Achilles' heel. It's either human-made or an inherent flaw. The 'why' can be a philosophical debate."

6. Understanding System Security

When we speak of security, it is important to understand that no system is completely immune to threats. The gold standard is not impenetrability, but to make the breach costly enough that it is counterproductive. In layman's terms,

the more complex the defense of technological system is, the more secure it will be. Still, there is another problem: there are always those rare minds that can see a step ahead, and beat almost any system's defense [9].

To explain this better, let's consider a universally understood analogy; the perpetual dance between creating foolproof systems and the continuous efforts to hack into these systems and exploit their latent flaws, reflects the scientific quest for theories that flawlessly decode our universe's intricacies. This idea is profoundly captured in Kurt Gödel's landmark 1931 incompleteness theorem. It articulates, "In any consistent formal system, there will exist truths that are neither provable nor disprovable within that system." This theorem underscores the inherent limitations embedded within any structured system [26].

In IT, the main challenges revolve around the system's structure and its components. There are operational layers, like the software, and an underlying layer, like its storage medium. Potential attackers can exploit this foundational layer, jeopardizing the integrity of the entire system. This is reminiscent of Gödel's theorem, which suggests the presence of statements in a system that are neither provable nor refutable: the answer lies outside of the system – or on a different layer of it.

Modern security methodologies recognize that creating an invincible system is logically an unattainable goal. This doesn't imply that security professionals should resign to this fate. Instead, the objective is to create a system which, while safeguarding its assets, can also promptly detect any unauthorized breaches. This is a more pragmatic objective.

Information security is an ever-evolving challenge. As companies design advanced systems to safeguard their information, there will always be sharp minds who figure out a way to bypass these defenses. To effectively secure sensitive data, one should tailor the protective measures according to the significance and sensitivity of that data. Essentially, this means assessing the potential harm should this data be accessed by unauthorized individuals. If required, it's wise to enlist the expertise of professionals who understand the strategies and thought processes of hackers [29].

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7 Appendix

7.1 Self-Assessment Checklist

The following checklist serves as a guide for you to evaluate your information security habits and thought processes. By addressing these questions, you'll gain insight into how you manage and safeguard data.

| | |
|--|--|
| What kind of information do I store on my computer or with my e-mail services like Gmail? | |
| Is it essential to keep such information on my computer or e-mail service? | |
| What personal details do I post on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn? | |
| What information about me appears when I'm searched on popular search engines like Google? | |
| Do I use a premium antivirus software on my computer? If yes, is it currently active? | |
| Have I installed encryption software on my computer? | |
| Is my password robust, with at least 8 characters, including a mix of lowercase, uppercase, numbers, and symbols? Can someone guess it from the provided list by tweaking some characters? | |
| Do I send sensitive information through e-mail? | |
| Do I communicate confidential details via mobile phone or SMS? | |
| Do I use messaging platforms like MSN or GTalk to share confidential info? | |
| When given a choice, do I prefer accessing websites via http or https? | |
| Do I consistently update my computer's OS, for instance, through Windows Update? | |
| If I have a home Wi-Fi network, is it password-protected? | |

Special thanks for the questionnaire to Boldizsár Bencsáth from the BME Csysys laboratory.

7.2 Speed of Cracking Passwords

| Character board | Number of symbols in the character table | 3 character password | | 6 character password | | 8 character password | | 12 character password | |
|--|--|----------------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------|-----------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | | Number of attempts | Amount of time | Number of attempts | Amount of time | Number of attempts | Amount of time | Number of attempts | Amount of time |
| a-z | 26 | 17 576 | 0.02 seconds | 308.915.776 | 5 minute | 208.827.064 .576 | 58 hour | 95.428.956.661.682.176 | 3000 year |
| a-z and 0-9 | 36 | 46 656 | 0.04 seconds | 2.176.782.336 | 36 minute | 2.821.109.907.456 | 32 days | 4.738.481.338.321.616.896 | 150.000 year |
| a-z, A-Z and 0-9 | 62 | 238 328 | 0.2 seconds | 56.800.235.584 | 15 hour | 2.183.40.105.584.896 | 7 year | 3.226.266.762.397.899.821.056 | 100 million years |
| a-z, A-Z, 0-9 and punctuation characters | 94 | 830 584 | 1 seconds | 689.869.781 .056 | 8 days | 6.095.689.385.410.816 | 193 year | 475.920.314 .814.253.376.475.136 | More than our planet has existed |

Calculated with 1,000,000 attempts per second using the brute force approach, systematically exploring all available options in sequential order.

7.3 Definition of Hacker

| Name of subculture | Description of subculture | Moral commitment |
|----------------------------------|--|---|
| Hacker (Type 1) | Comprised of software developers and system administrators proficient in open source software. | They always uphold moral and ethical standards and are never involved in criminal activities. |
| Hacker(2) (Whitehat) | Professionals skilled in advanced operating system and network security. | They operate within the bounds of the law and often assist in securing systems. Some may have a past criminal record but have since reformed. |
| Hacker(2) (Blackhat) | IT specialists, deeply knowledgeable about operating systems and network security. | Their activities often breach legal and ethical boundaries. Their motives can be explored further in the "Real Motivation of the Hacker" section. |
| Hacker(2) (Greyhat) | IT specialists, software developers, and system administrators focused on security. | Their moral compass isn't fixed. They sometimes operate for personal gains, blurring the lines between right and wrong. |
| Script Kid / Wannabe | Mainly young individuals aged 13 to 20, with minimal technical know-how. | They mimic hacker tools and methods for personal objectives, often misusing the acquired knowledge. |
| Cracker(1) (Warez) | IT experts highly skilled in software development. | Their main objective is to bypass software licensing, which is legally and ethically questionable. |
| Cracker (Type 2 - Hacker) | Matches the definition of hacker type 2. | They are mistakenly equated with hacker type 1, creating confusion in understanding their intent. |

7.4 The list of most common and simplest hungarian passwords based on a data breach: examples

| | | |
|------|------------|------------|
| 1 | 1986 | 1983.10.11 |
| 326 | 1998 | 31223 |
| 517 | 2278 | 21.szept |
| 524 | 2330 | 42777 |
| 1004 | 2538 | 174174 |
| 1025 | 4321 | 191020 |
| 1111 | 4507 | 195607 |
| 1112 | 4747 | 196205 |
| 1213 | 5678 | 251176 |
| 1234 | 5724 | 278686 |
| 1254 | 6610 | 319402 |
| 1357 | 6701 | 530904 |
| 1492 | 6870 | 540524 |
| 1591 | 6969 | 550103 |
| 1652 | 7777 | 580828 |
| 1796 | 12345 | 691003 |
| 1952 | 16136 | 696969 |
| 1965 | 17675 | 710409 |
| 1970 | 19571 | 720504 |
| 1972 | 19781 | 721111 |
| 1975 | 1958.01.20 | 782604 |

| | | |
|-----------|----------|------------|
| 840101 | 1980fx | 4kicsikem4 |
| 931018 | ldoggy | 53logy43 |
| 981220 | 1mihu12 | 56qqri |
| 4434079 | 1roda! | 5m8p9t18 |
| 8101953 | 1viskyma | 65530b |
| 12345678 | 2941gita | 666zsoli |
| 17891848 | 2996nkp | 6810isr |
| 18109064 | 2G9a87nY | 7044c |
| 19730203 | 2gudea | 7476fany |
| 81107115 | 2poljev | 77-82 |
| .JULCSI | 333er333 | 80do06 |
| 033l | 333er333 | 8klidor |
| 0926t | 3376ki | 9380blw |
| 1085acsi | 3376ki | 97-vik |
| 10assvan | 3amigo | 98msvi |
| 11magus | 3amigo | 99febr18 |
| 1208-984 | 3gf4_1b3 | 9ceas9 |
| 123abc | 3marek | a_szij |
| 123ati | 3zbg1tl | a1234 |
| 12chrysa | 4047mj | a12345 |
| 12chrysan | 40a58m | a175b27 |
| 1510tnax | 43logy50 | a1962 |
| 18101981g | 43logy53 | a1b2c3 |
| 1936ab | 43logy55 | a1b2c3d4 |

| | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| a2000 | adobt | amarilla |
| a31tcp | adria624 | ambrusr |
| a3530ana | alain1 | amd12 |
| a580304 | alaszka | amd-12 |
| a77ke98r | albundy | amerika |
| AAA101 | alex06 | amore |
| aap200 | alex123 | amt119tl |
| ab96el | alex26 | and-01 |
| | alex1 | andi |
| abc002 | | andi1 |
| abc123 | alfai46 | |
| abcd1234 | alfai46{a | 45 |
| abcd7905 | alit | |
| abdelroy | allvany | andi5 |
| abekubi2 | alma1 | andras_ |
| acs09fp5 | almafa55 | andras1 |
| adam | almus99 | andrea |
| addade | altri555 | andris69 |
| adeeka | aludanyi | andromed1 |
| adel | alum21 | angel1 |
| adenn | alvez01 | angel2 |
| adetef | alvin | angel666 |
| adi257 | am62-420 | Aniadat |
| admin | amanda1 | aniko12 |

| | | |
|-----------|----------|----------|
| aniko97 | arles1 | axu-3e2 |
| anna | arni97 | b12459 |
| anna.topi | arnika | b1451 |
| annamari | aron-158 | b1lint |
| annie6 | arpi74 | b1-umisi |
| antler | astudio | b244s3 |
| aobrz20 | asud3 | b-432 |
| aobrznk | aszi | baba |
| aod-015 | atamas | babe |
| apa-21 | atam-at6 | babe184 |
| apa44430 | aterner | babe1q84 |
| apa55 | ati666 | baby |
| apollo | atinori2 | babys |
| apollo1 | atti-31- | badger |
| apuci1 | atybatyo | badi |
| apukam1 | audi | badmad |
| | audit98 | bagogaby |
| aq9q7zpf | auth | bagoly |
| aram1 | auto1967 | balage |
| area51 | aval | balance |
| ariane4 | avs2000 | balazs |
| ariann | axe | balazs1 |
| ariel | AXEL7 | |
| ariel777 | axt32i | balazsf |

| | | |
|----------|----------|--------------|
| balet | battila | benjamin |
| bali95 | | benji |
| balint | bb286 | benton |
| balis | bbb123 | BENYUS |
| balog | bbking97 | benyusBENYUS |
| baltibu | bbu35 | bere-1 |
| balu | bch77 | berger |
| balu1 | bcs0422 | berry |
| banco1 | bcs0501 | berta |
| bandhc | bcs968 | berti |
| bandi | bea | better8 |
| Banka3 | bea1977 | betti |
| bapevi | bea1997 | bevill |
| baracca1 | beababa | bfonyi99 |
| barack | bear-65 | bgzv9412 |
| barbi | beati | bhodut1 |
| bardo007 | beatrice | bibi |
| barna | bela1 | bibiana4 |
| barnas | belize | big5mac |
| baronred | belli | bigbig |
| bartfai | belov | bill |
| bartok | belly | bingo |
| basil | beng1 | biomed |
| bastard | beni1994 | biorad |

| | | |
|----------|----------|----------|
| biosci | bocika | bs-tt1 |
| birkozo1 | bodri | bteg555 |
| bis | boera | bteg555w |
| bizt1992 | bohai757 | bu |
| bjudit | bola96 | bub30 |
| bkartya | bond007 | buba |
| bkiss | boney99 | bubak2 |
| | bonnh | bubu |
| bk-tt1 | bonnie | bubus |
| blabla | bonver | buda1 |
| blacky | booster | buda1999 |
| blanche4 | bor | budaker |
| blanka | borka1 | budha |
| bloom | boss36 | |
| blue123 | box | 46 |
| bmarton | bp1975 | |
| bmw318 | b-peter | bugi |
| bmw320 | bpeti98 | buince |
| bncw1 | br-150b | bunny99 |
| bnsak | brei18 | buro |
| boara666 | breki | bushi |
| boarder | brsoft2 | buza |
| bobi | brumi | Bvarga9 |
| bociboci | brutus1 | bzsolt |

| | | |
|-----------|----------|----------|
| bzs-tt1 | charlesi | codiszu |
| c06 | charlie | collins1 |
| c25e388 | cheode | coltrane |
| ca96-rd9 | chicago | com1011 |
| ca97-rd9 | chico | compuser |
| cab118 | chiow | consumer |
| cab171 | chris1 | cooks |
| cadland | chris127 | cool24 |
| cargo | chsafety | coop94 |
| cargomg | cica | coop98 |
| carmen | cicus | cora98 |
| cat98 | citizen2 | cordell1 |
| catman | city2000 | corsa |
| cbardos | citypost | cosmo1 |
| CCR591 | cityrama | crampus |
| cc-rass | cjuris | cranta |
| ced19mk | clean | cris1219 |
| ce-dug5y | clear | crispin |
| celeron33 | co9153mp | criss |
| center | coala | cross |
| Cepex | codicod | crowx1 |
| chad | | ct3-za |
| chappers | codimail | ct3-zb |
| charles | codisag | ctglml |

| | | |
|----------|---------------|----------|
| cucu | csita3 | day684 |
| | csk123 | deakeam |
| cukipofa | csobadkossuth | dejong |
| curtis | csoki | deko01 |
| cvb280 | | deko02 |
| cwu071 | csopi1 | dekois |
| czarpi | csoport | dekor967 |
| cs99aba | csubi84 | Demina |
| csaba_p | d1988 | |
| csaba1 | d2000 | denes73 |
| csabt2 | d4261205 | denesori |
| csarda | da21vid | derrick3 |
| csarnota | daddy48 | design |
| csb0501 | daewoo | designer |
| csc999 | dando | devil |
| csege063 | dani | dex298 |
| csepel21 | dani1973 | dezso |
| cserik | dani1995 | df9920 |
| csf6811 | daniel28 | Diamond0 |
| csiga727 | daniking | diana |
| csilla1 | darabos | dianna |
| csimo | dark | dick99 |
| csipet01 | datex532 | didoman1 |
| csir850 | david | di-ea43 |

| | | |
|-----------|-----------|----------|
| digit | double | eju430 |
| dimen10 | drakula5 | ekg937 |
| dimfli | drbana | elef-11 |
| dina111 | dubartan | elef-11n |
| dinosoft | duck | elemerke |
| dio67 | dudas | elim |
| dioda | dugo35 | elvira |
| divus99 | dusko1 | embi58 |
| djs510 | dussmann | embory2 |
| dlb23 | dyl464 | emil |
| dn7779 | e1972 | emma |
| | e3338 | ene923 |
| dodo1 | e4d8a9 | enercon1 |
| dolly | e4xTkoRg | epa1 |
| donibeni | E-710504 | epitesz |
| dora6271 | east5 | erd2035 |
| dora91 | ebicapa | erik |
| dora97 | edina20 | |
| dorcsi28 | edinaniki | 47 |
| dori08229 | ediniki | |
| dori0829 | edit127 | erika |
| dorian | edu1011 | erika71 |
| dorka | eger | erj308 |
| dote | egry23 | ert250 |

| | | |
|----------|------------|-----------|
| ertekes | farix4 | finak |
| esocsepp | fat-boy | fire25 |
| esthe | fat-boyn | |
| esz133 | fbg1971 | fisccher |
| etnevel2 | fc1g5 | fischer |
| etruszk | fce111 | fis-cher |
| eudialog | fdavid | fk-825 |
| ev596970 | fe63co19 | Flaint69 |
| eva | feedanal | flamingo |
| eva68 | feherke0 | flash |
| eva88 | fejleszt | floorgres |
| evaep | fejlesztés | florida |
| evafreko | felax | florida21 |
| eve68 | fenix99 | flowers1 |
| evic267a | fenyo3a | focus |
| extra97 | ferba13 | font_ds |
| eyal-sh | ferdi555 | forgalmaz |
| f19 | feri | forintos |
| fa1996 | feri732 | forma1 |
| fa6902 | ferstomp | fortin52 |
| faludi52 | fht-488 | forzol |
| fany1 | fhtwtr | foti56 |
| farag1 | fifi | foxta |
| | fifo | frederic |

| | | |
|----------|------------|-----------|
| frozsa | gali | gizella |
| ftc21 | galpeter | glktv |
| fuckyou2 | gandore | gobbbi |
| FULEMULE | gangster | god001 |
| furcsa | garfield | golden4 |
| fyfy1 | garver97 | gombi971 |
| | gasi | goncol7 |
| g1gomba | gaspar1 | gordon77 |
| ga7to13 | gast1997 | goston |
| ga8n07 | | gotcha |
| gab1412 | gbt97re4 | gre75 |
| gab99 | gcs759 | greg1 |
| gabas | genesis | gregory12 |
| gabi | georg1 | gu7mo |
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| hanna | hiba8 | hunyady1 |
| haseb1 | hifi2000 | hwacho |
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| jozsef2 | k2948 | kati-98 |
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| jsb138 | kaaz-ko | katona31 |
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| kis50813 | konto | kukoc |
| kisbea | korhaz | kulcs |
| kiss | koris | kutkuthu |
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| kjocox7 | koronatp | kzp120 |
| kk411 | korso77 | kz-p4729 |
| kkk | kosal1 | kzsolt |
| kl-1967 | koti | l7128 |
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| klassic1 | kozp120 | la2ci |
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| laj12081 | lik566a1 | |
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| w55664 | x5bl8af | zoli65 |
| w9123 | x613zsc13 | zollplus |
| wal3o-zu | xbb123 | zoltan |
| waldman | xfiles3 | zoo629 |
| walterpass | xida | zuz3e-ta |
| wbt123 | xkorona | zyolt |
| weiwink3 | xxx | zyw513 |
| well-1 | xyize | zsazsa |
| wer589 | YES | zsfj |
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