

# Security in Routing Protocol for Ad Hoc Networks

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**Abstract:** In this paper, we discuss security issues and their current solutions in the ad hoc Networks. Ad hoc networks are a key factor in the evolution of wireless communications. An ad hoc wireless network is a collection of wireless nodes that self-configure to construct a network without the need for any established infrastructure or backbone. Security in ad hoc network is a grand challenge problem now a day. To enhance the security levels in the routing protocol to prevent the network against active and passive attacks without the presence of central authority. A peer review process has been introduced to check the integrity and non-repudiation of the routing packets and key exchange packets. Many of the ad hoc routing protocols that address security issues rely on implicit trust relationships to route packets among participating nodes. The general security objectives like authentication, confidentiality, integrity, availability and nonrepudiation, the ad hoc routing protocols should also address location confidentiality, cooperation fairness and absence of traffic diversion. Various approaches and protocols have been proposed to address ad hoc networking problems, and multiple standardization efforts are under way within the Internet Engineering Task Force, as well as academic and industrial research projects. In this paper we attempt to analyze threats faced by the ad hoc network environment and provide a classification of the various security mechanisms.

**Keywords:** wireless networks; routing; routing protocol, ad hoc network, security

## 1. Introduction

An ad-hoc network is a self-configuring network of wireless links connecting mobile nodes. These nodes may be routers and/or hosts. The mobile nodes communicate directly with each other and without the aid of access points, and therefore have no fixed infrastructure. They form an arbitrary topology, where the routers are free to move randomly and arrange themselves as required. Each node or mobile device is equipped with a transmitter and receiver. They are said to be purpose-specific, autonomous and dynamic. This compares greatly with fixed wireless networks, as there is no master slave relationship that exists in a mobile ad-hoc network. Nodes rely on each other to established communication, thus each node acts as a router. Therefore, in a mobile ad-hoc network, a packet can travel from a source to a destination either directly, or through some set of intermediate packet forwarding nodes.

In a wireless world, dominated by Wi-Fi, architectures which mix mesh networking and ad-hoc connections are the beginning of a technology revolution based on their simplicity. On wireless computer networks, ad hoc mode is a method for wireless devices to directly communicate with each other. Operating in ad-hoc mode allows all wireless devices within range of each other to discover and communicate in peer-to-peer fashion without involving central access. An ad-hoc network tends to feature a small group of devices all in very close proximity to each other. Performance suffers as the number of devices grows, and a large ad-hoc network quickly becomes difficult to manage. Ad-hoc networks cannot bridge to wire Ad-hoc networks are a new paradigm of wireless communication for mobile hosts. There is no fixed infrastructure such as base stations for mobile switching. Nodes within each other's radio range communicate directly via wireless links while those which are far apart rely on other nodes to relay messages. Node mobility causes frequent changes in topology. The wireless nature of communication and lack of any security infrastructure raises several security problems [1] [2]. Figure 1 shows the working of ad hoc network. There are two

different types of wireless networks. The first and easiest network topology is where each node is able to reach all the other nodes with a traditional radio relay system with a big range. There is no use of routing protocols with this kind of network because all nodes "can see" the others. The second kind uses also the radio relay system but each node has a smaller range, therefore one node has to use neighboring nodes to reach another node that is not within its transmission range. Then, the intermediate nodes are the routers.

In this paper our main focus is regarding the security of the currently implemented routing algorithms. The focus is mainly on the security of the routing protocols used in the second kind of ad-hoc network. Any routing protocol must encapsulate an essential set of security mechanisms. These are mechanisms that help prevent, detect, and respond to security attacks. There are five major security goals that need to be addressed in order to maintain a reliable and secure ad-hoc network environment.

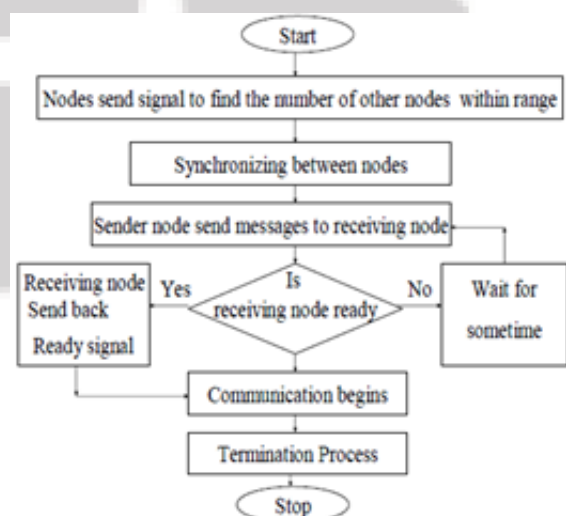


Figure 1: Working of a general Ad Hoc Network

They are mainly; *Confidentiality*: Protection of any information from being exposed to unintended entities. In ad-hoc networks this is more difficult to achieve because intermediate nodes (that act as routers) receive the packets for other recipients, so they can easily eavesdrop the information being routed; *Availability*: Services should be available whenever required. There should be an assurance of survivability despite a Denial of Service (DOS) attack. On physical and media access control layer attacker can use jamming techniques to interfere with communication on physical channel. On network layer the attacker can disrupt the routing protocol. On higher layers, the attacker could bring down high level services e.g. key management service.

- **Authentication**: Assurance that an entity of concern or the origin of a communication is what it claims to be or from. Without which an attacker would impersonate a node, thus gaining unauthorized access to resource and sensitive information and interfering with operation of other nodes.
- **Integrity**: Message being transmitted is never altered.
- **Non-repudiation**: Ensures that sending and receiving parties can never deny ever sending or receiving the message.

All the security mechanisms must be implemented in any ad-hoc networks so as to ensure the security of the transmissions along that network. Whenever considering any security issues with respect to a network, there is a need to ensure that the above mentioned security goals have been put into effect and none (most) of them are flawed. Contemporary Routing Protocols for ad-hoc networks cope well with dynamically changing topology but are not designed to accommodate defense against malicious attackers. No single standard protocol captures the common security threats and provides the guidelines to a secure routing scheme. Routers exchange network topology, informally, in order to establish routes between nodes and other networks which act as another potential target for malicious attackers. Broadly there are two major categories of attacks when considering any network: Attacks from external sources and attacks from within the network. The second attack is more severe and detection and correction is difficult. Routing protocol should be able to secure themselves against both of these attacks.

## 2. Security Issues in Routing Protocols

The contemporary routing protocols for ad-hoc networks cope well with dynamically changing topology but are not designed to accommodate defense against malicious attackers. Today's routing algorithms are not able to thwart common security threats. Most of the existing ad hoc routing protocols do not accommodate any security and are highly vulnerable to attacks. Threats and attacks against ad hoc routing under several areas of application and suggested [13] solutions that could be used when secure protocols are designed. Routers exchange network topology informally in order to establish routes between nodes - another potential target for malicious attackers who intend to bring down the network. External attackers inject erroneous routing information, replaying old routing information or distort routing information in order to partition a network or overload a network with retransmissions, thereby causing congestion, and hence a denial of service. Internally compromised nodes are harder to detect and correct. Routing

information signed by each node will not work since compromised nodes can generate valid signatures using their private keys. Detection of compromised nodes through routing information is also difficult due to the dynamic topology of ad hoc networks.

In mobile ad-hoc networks, nodes do not rely on any routing infrastructure but relay packets for each other. Thus communication in mobile ad-hoc networks functions properly only if the participating nodes cooperate in routing and forwarding [19]. However, it may be advantageous for individual nodes not to cooperate, for example to save power or to launch security attacks such as denial-of-service. In this paper, we give an overview of potential vulnerabilities and security requirements of mobile ad-hoc networks, and proposed prevention, detection and reaction mechanisms to thwart attacks.

### 2.1 Types of ad hoc Routing Protocols

In general there are two types of routing protocols:

- Proactive Routing Protocols
- Reactive Routing Protocols

In Proactive Routing Protocols, the nodes keep updating their routing table's by periodic messages. This can be seen in Optimized Link State Routing Protocol (OLSR) and the Topology Broadcast based on Reverse Path Forwarding Protocol (TBRPF). In Reactive or On Demand Routing Protocols the routes are created only when they are needed. The application of this protocol can be seen in the Dynamic Source Routing Protocol (DSR) and the Ad-hoc On-demand Distance Vector Routing Protocol (AODV). In today's world the most common ad-hoc protocols are the Ad-hoc On-demand Distance Vector routing protocol and the Destination-Sequenced Distance-Vector routing protocol and the Dynamic Source Routing. All these protocols are quite insecure because attackers can easily obtain information about the network topology. This is because in the AODV and DSR protocols, the route discovery packets are carried in clear text. Thus a malicious node can discover the network structure just by analyzing this kind of packets and may be able to determine the role of each node in the network. With all these information more serious attacks can be launched in order to disrupt network operations. First, confirm that you have the correct template for your paper size. This template has been tailored for output on the US-letter paper size. If you are using A4-sized paper, please close this file and download the file for "MSW A4 format".

### 2.2 Types of Attacks Faced by Routing Protocols

Due to their underlined architecture, ad-hoc networks are more easily attacked than a wired network. The attacks prevalent on ad-hoc routing protocols can be broadly classified into passive and active attacks.

A *Passive Attack* does not disrupt the operation of the protocol, but tries to discover valuable information by listening to traffic. Passive attacks basically involve obtaining vital routing information by sniffing about the network. Such attacks are usually difficult to detect and

hence, defending against such attacks is complicated. Even if it is not possible to identify the exact location of a node, one may be able to discover information about the network topology, using these attacks.

An *Active Attack*, however, injects arbitrary packets and tries to disrupt the operation of the protocol in order to limit availability, gain authentication, or attract packets destined to other nodes. The goal is basically to attract all packets to the attacker for analysis or to disable the network. Such attacks can be detected and the nodes can be identified.

### 2.3 Attacks against Ad Hoc Networks

The most prominent attacks prevalent against ad hoc networks, most of which are active attack [5]. We address these attacks are

#### 1) Attacks based on modification

This is the simplest way for a malicious node to disturb the operations of an ad-hoc network. The only task the malicious node needs to perform is to announce better routes (to reach other nodes or just a specific one) than the ones presently existing. This kind of attack is based on the modification of the metric value for a route or by altering control message fields. There are 3 ways in which this can be achieved: *Redirection by Changing the Route Sequence Number*: When deciding upon the best / optimum path to take through a network, the node always relies on a metric of values, such as hop count delay etc. The smaller the value, the more optimum the path. Hence, a simple way to attack a network is to change this value with a smaller number than the last "better" value. *Redirection by Altering the Hop Count*: This attack is more specific to the AODV protocol wherein the optimum path is chosen by the hop count metric. A malicious node can disturb the network by announcing the smallest hop count value to reach the compromised node. In general, an attacker would use a value zero to ensure the smallest hop count. Taking for example the 'wormhole' attack, [14] an attacker records packets at one location in the network, tunnels them to another location, and retransmits them there into the network. This could potentially lead to a situation where, it would not be possible to find routes longer than one or two hops, probably disrupting communication. *Denial of Service by Altering Routing Information*: Consider, in a bus topology, a scenario wherein a node A wants to communicate with node E. At node A the routing path in the header would be A-B-C-D-E. If B is a compromised node, it can alter this routing detail to A-B-C-E. But since there exists no direct route from C to E, C will drop the packet. Thus, A will never be able to access any service / information from E. Another instance can be seen when considering a category of attacks called 'The Black Hole Attacks'. Here, a malicious node uses the routing protocol to advertise itself as having the shortest path to the node whose packets it wants to intercept. Once the malicious node has been able to insert itself between the communicating nodes, it can do anything with the packets passing between them. It can then choose to drop the packets thereby creating a DoS.

#### 2) Impersonation Attacks

More generally known as 'spoofing', since the malicious node hides its IP and or MAC address and uses that of another node. Since current ad-hoc routing protocols

like AODV and DSR do not authenticate source IP address, a malicious node can launch many attacks by using spoofing. Take for example a situation wherein an attacker creates loops in the network to isolate a node from the remainder of the network. To do this, the attacker needs to spoof the IP address of the node he wants to isolate from the network and then announce new route to the other nodes. By doing this, he can easily modify the network topology as he wants.

#### 3) Attacks by Fabrication of Information

There are basically 3 sub categories for fabrication attacks. In any of the 3 cases, detection is very difficult. *Falsification of Rote Error Messages*: This attack is very prominent in AODV and DSR, because these two protocols use path maintenance to recover the optimum path when nodes move. The weakness of this architecture is that whenever a node moves, the closest node sends an "error" message to the other nodes so as to inform them that a route is no longer accessible. If an attacker can cause a DoS attack by spoofing any node and sending error messages to the all other nodes. Thus, the malicious node can isolate any node quite easily. *Corrupting Routing State – Route Cache Poisoning*: A passive attack that can occur especially in DSR due to the promiscuous mode of updating routing tables which is employed. This occurs when information stored in routing tables is deleted, altered or injected with false information. A node overhearing any packet may add the routing information contained in that packet's header to its own route cache, even if that node is not on the path from source to destination. The vulnerability of this system is that an attacker could easily exploit this method of learning routes and poison route caches by broadcast a message with a spoofed IP address to other nodes. When they receive this message, the nodes would add this new route to their cache and would now communicate using the route to reach the malicious node.

*Routing table overflow attack*: Consider ad-hoc network using a "proactive" protocol i.e. an algorithm which tries to find routing information even before it is needed. This creates vulnerabilities since the attacker can attempt to create routes to non-existent nodes. If enough routes are created, new routes can no longer be added due to an overwhelming pressure on the protocol. After considering all the above plausible attacks we can draw a conclusion that we need to have a routing protocol that establishes routes without being susceptible to false information from any malicious node. A good routing protocol should also be able to detect the malicious nodes and to react in consequence, by changing routes, etc. A malicious node can however, be either a potential attacker or a regular node which encountered problems (low battery, etc.).

### 3. Classification of Techniques Used to Secured Hoc Networks

In order to provide solutions to the security issues involved in ad-hoc networks, we must elaborate on the two of the most commonly used approaches in use today:

- Prevention
- Detection and Reaction

Prevention dictates solutions that are designed such that malicious nodes are thwarted from actively initiating attacks. Prevention mechanisms require encryption techniques to provide authentication, confidentiality, integrity and nonrepudiation of routing information. Among the existing preventive approaches, some proposals use symmetrical algorithms, some use asymmetric algorithms, while the others use one-way hashing, each having different trade-offs and goals. Prevention mechanisms, by themselves cannot ensure complete cooperation among nodes in the network. Detection on the other hand specifies solutions that attempt to identify clues of any malicious activity in the network and take punitive actions against such nodes. A node may misbehave by agreeing to forward packets and then failing to do so, because it is overloaded, selfish or malicious. An overloaded node lacks the CPU cycles, buffer space or available network bandwidth to forward packets. A selfish node [18] is unwilling to spend battery life, CPU cycles or available network bandwidth to forward packets not of direct interest to it, even though it expects others to forward packets on its behalf. A malicious node [14] launches a denial of service attack by dropping packets. All protocols defined in this category detect and react to such misbehavior.

Using this as the basis for our survey, we describe the following broad classifications:

- Prevention using asymmetric cryptography using symmetric cryptography using one-way hash chains
- Detection and Reaction.

### 3.1 Prevention using Asymmetric Cryptography

Asymmetric cryptographic techniques specify the underlined basic methodology of operation for protocols under this category. A secure wired network or a similar network is required to distribute public keys or digital certificates in the ad-hoc network. Mathematically speaking a network with  $n$  nodes would require  $n$  public keys stored in the network. SAODV [3] (an extension to AODV routing protocol) and ARAN [4] are two of the protocols defined in this category.

### 3.2 Prevention using symmetric cryptography

Symmetric cryptographic techniques are used to avoid attacks on routing protocols in this section. We assume that symmetric keys are pre-negotiated via a secured wired connection. Taking a mathematical approach we see that a network with ' $n$ ' nodes would require  $n * (n + 1) / 2$  pair wise keys stored in the network. SAR [5] and SRP [6] [16] [15] are the two protocols that belong to this category.

#### 1) Prevention using Asymmetric Cryptography: Secure Ad-hoc On-demand Distance Vector Routing Protocol (SAODV) [3]

SAODV adds security to the famous AODV protocol. Its basic functionality lies in securing the ADOV protocol by authenticating the non-mutable fields of the routing message using digital signatures. It also provides an end-to-end authentication and node-to-node verification of these messages. The underlined process is relatively simple. The source node digitally signs the route request packet (RREQ) and broadcasts it to its neighbors. When an intermediate node receives a RREQ message, it first verifies the signature

before creating or updating a reverse route to its predecessor. It then stores or updates the route only if the signature is verified. A similar procedure is followed for the route reply packet (RREP). As an optimization, intermediate nodes can reply with RREP messages, if they have a "fresh enough" route to the destination. Since the intermediate node will have to digitally sign the RREP message as if it came from the destination, it uses the double signature extension described in this protocol. The only mutable field in SAODV messages is the hop-count value. In order to prevent wormhole attacks this protocol computes a hash of the hop count field.

#### 2) Prevention using Asymmetric Cryptography: Authenticated Routing for Ad-hoc Networks (ARAN) [4]

ARAN is an on-demand routing protocol that makes use of cryptographic certificates to offer routing security. Its main usage is seen in managed-open environments. It consists of a preliminary certification process followed by a route instantiation process that guarantees end-to-end authentication.

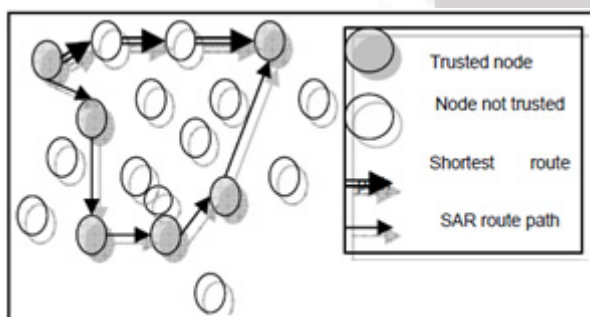
This protocol requires the use of a trusted certificate server  $T$ , whose public key is known to all the nodes in the network. End-to-end authentication is achieved by the source by having it verify that the intended destination was reached. In this process, the source trusts the destination to choose the return path. The source begins route instantiation by broadcasting a Route Discovery Packet (RDP) that is digitally signed by the source. Following this, every intermediate node verifies the integrity of the packet received by verifying the signature. The first intermediate node appends its own signature encapsulated over the signed packet that it received from the source. All subsequent intermediate nodes remove the signature of their predecessors, verify it and then append their signature to the packet. The RDP packet contains a nonce and timestamp to prevent replay attacks and to detect looping. Similarly, each node along the reverse path (destination to source) signs the RREP and appends its own certificate before forwarding the RREP to the next hop. Although hashing the hop-count value prevents malicious nodes in advertising shorter routes in SAODV, it does not prevent nodes from advertising longer routes. Nodes can forward routing messages by applying the hash function multiple times making the route appear longer than it is.

One of the main issues with the ARAN protocol is the requirement of a certificate server, which means that the integrity of that server is vital. This is by however, only a design issue and as it is intended for securing communication over a managed-open environment it shouldn't be considered a big issue. Both the protocols in this category do not address wormhole attacks. While ARAN provides both node-to-node and end-to-end authentication, it does not have any significant gain over SAODV (that uses only end-to-end authentication) in terms of security.

#### 3) Prevention using Symmetric Cryptography: Security-Aware ad hoc Routing (SAR) [5]

SAR is an attempt to use traditional shared symmetric key encryption in order to provide a higher level of security in ad hoc networks. SAR can basically extend any of the

current ad hoc routing protocols without any major issues. The SAR protocol makes use of trust levels (security attributes assigned to nodes) to make informed, secure routing decision. Although current routing protocols discover the shortest path between two nodes, SAR can discover a path with desired security attributes (E.g. a path through nodes with a particular shared key). The different trust levels are implemented using shared symmetric keys. In order for a node to forward or receive a packet it first has to decrypt it and therefore it needs the required key. Any nodes not on the requested trust level will not have the key and cannot forward or read the packets. Every node sending a packet decides what trust level to use for the transfer and thereby decides the trust level required by every node that will forward the packet to its final destination.



**Figure 2:** Variation of shortest path route selection between SAR and other routing algorithms

SAR is indeed secure in the way that it does ensure that only nodes having the required trust level will read and reroute the packets being sent. Unfortunately, SAR still leaves a lot of security issues uncovered and still open for attacks such as:

- Nothing is done to prevent intervention of a possibly malicious node from being used for routing, as long as they have the required key
- If a malicious node somehow retrieves the required key the protocol has no further security measure to prevent against the attacker from bringing the entire network to a standstill.
- There is excessive encryption and decryption required at each hop. Since we are dealing with mobile environments the extra processing leading to increased power consumption can be a problem.

SAR is intended for the managed-open environment as it requires some sort of key distribution system in order to distribute the trust level keys to the correct devices.

#### 4) Prevention using Symmetric Cryptography: Secure Routing Protocol (SRP) [6]

Secure Routing Protocol, SRP, is another protocol extension that can be applied to any of the most commonly used protocols today. The basic idea of SRP is to set up a security association (SA) between the source and the destination node. [16] An SA is a secret-key scheme used to preserve integrity in the routing information. The SA is usually set up by negotiating a shared key based on the other party's public key, and after that the key can be used to encrypt and decrypt the messages. The routing path is always sent along with the

packets, unencrypted though (since none of the intermediate nodes have knowledge of the shared key).

The above features are achieved with low computational cost and bit overhead. In addition, the protocol is practically immune to IP spoofing and implements partial caching without compromising security in the network. More than one RREQ packet reaches the destination through different routes. The destination calculates a MAC covering the RREP contents and then returns the packet to the source over the reverse route accumulated in the respective RREQ packet. The destination responds to one or more route request packets to provide the source with an as diverse topology picture as possible.

## 4. Conclusion

Mobile ad-hoc networks have properties that increase their vulnerability to attacks. Unreliable wireless links are vulnerable to jamming and by their inherent broadcast nature facilitate eavesdropping. Constraints in bandwidth, computing power, and battery power in mobile devices can lead to application specific trade-offs between security and resource consumption of the device. Mobility/Dynamics make it hard to detect behavior anomalies such as advertising bogus routes, because routes in this environment change frequently. Self-organization is a key property of ad-hoc networks. Besides authentication, confidentiality, integrity, availability, access control, and non-repudiation being harder to enforce because of the properties of mobile ad-hoc networks, there are also additional requirements such as location confidentiality, cooperation fairness and the absence of traffic diversion.

The lack of infrastructure and of an organizational environment of mobile ad-hoc networks offers special opportunities to attackers. Without proper security, it is possible to gain various advantages by malicious behavior: better service than cooperating nodes, monetary benefits by exploiting incentive measures or trading confidential information; saving power by selfish behavior; preventing someone else from getting proper service, extracting data to get confidential information, and so on. Routes should be advertised and set up adhering to the routing protocol chosen and should truthfully reflect the knowledge of the topology of the network. By diverting the traffic towards or away from a node, incorrect forwarding, no forwarding at all, or other non-cooperative behavior, nodes can attack the network. We have discussed the various routing and forwarding attacks in this survey. We have also discussed prevention and detection mechanisms that were adopted to provide security in ad hoc networks. A prevention-only strategy will only work if the prevention mechanisms are perfect; otherwise, someone will find out how to get around them. Most of the attacks and vulnerabilities have been the result of bypassing prevention mechanisms. In view of this reality, detection and response are essential. In this paper we discussed proposals representing all of these classes. Even though prevention works as the first line of defense, it is not sufficient in addressing all the security threats. Hence we suggest an integrated layered framework which adopts the prevention techniques for the first level and detection techniques can be

used at the second level complementing the protection techniques.

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