### **Repairing DoS Vulnerability of Real-World Regexes**

#### Nariyoshi Chida<sup>1,2</sup> and Tachio Terauchi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>NTT Security Japan\*; <sup>2</sup>Waseda University

@S&P 2022 25 May 2022

☆ Temporary transfer from NTT Corporation

# **Regular Expressions (Regexes)**

#### Regexes are ubiquitous in modern software development.

#### Sanitizing user inputs:



Validate the input string using regex

#### **Extracting data from unstructured text**:

#### ^([0-9]{1,3}[.]){3}[0-9]{1,3}\$

The "Authorization.exe" variant in this report to have been available at some point through the following URL: "hxxp://bongdaco...dong.v., "thorization.exe". The domain currently resolves to the following IP address: 112.213.89.17 but at some point, the domain was associated with the following IP address: "31.170.165.90!.

#### IoC extraction from threat reports



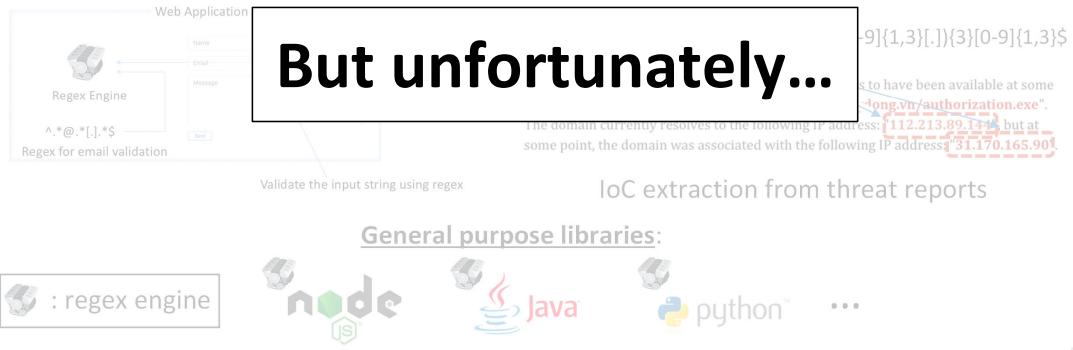


# **Regular Expressions (Regexes)**

#### Regexes are ubiquitous in modern software development.

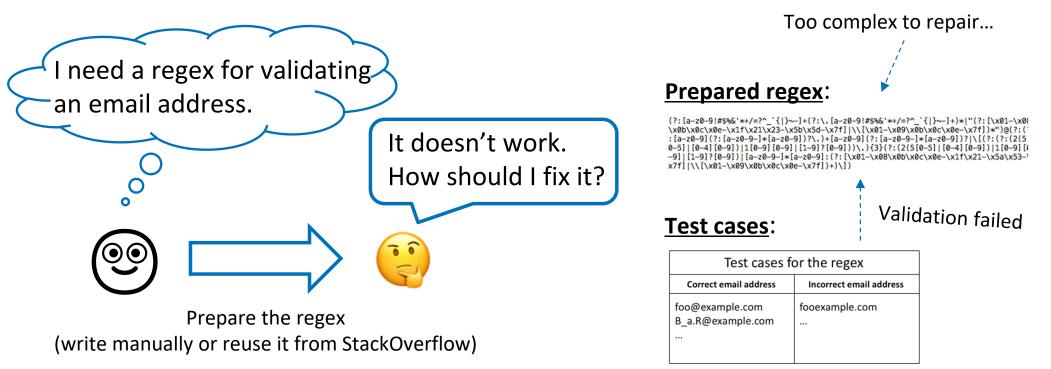
Sanitizing user inputs:

**Extracting data from unstructured text**:



### **Regexes are Hard!**

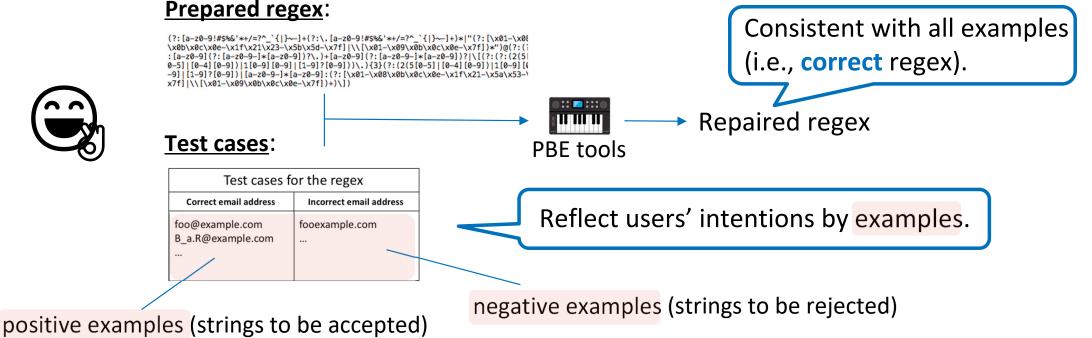
#### Writing (or repairing) regexes are difficult...[Michael+ 2019]



### **Programming-By-Example (PBE)**

# One prominent approach to improve this situation is writing regexes with PBE method.

[Lee+ 2016] [Pan+ 2019] [Chen+ 2020]...



### Now, are we free from the difficulties of regexes?

# Now, are we free from the difficulties of regexes? **No!** We are still facing the difficulties of their vulnerabilities called regex denial of services (ReDoS).

Indeed, the existing PBE methods may generate vulnerable regexes. [Li+ 2020]

### **Regex Denial of Service (ReDoS)**

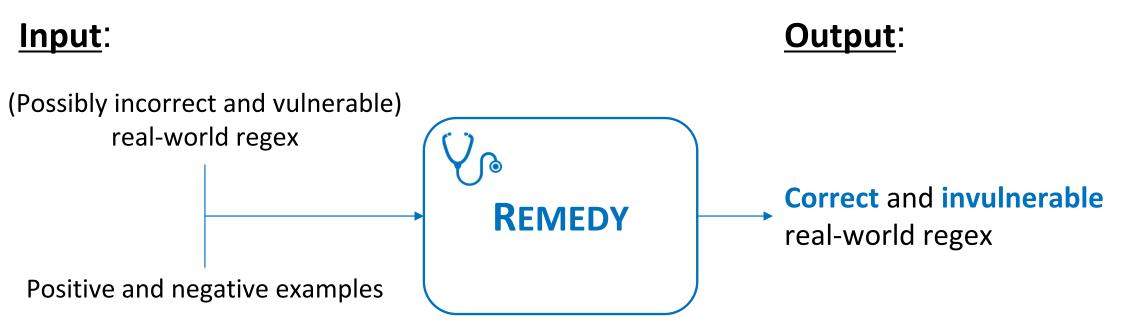
ReDoS is the vulnerability that causes the regex matching algorithm to take super linear time.

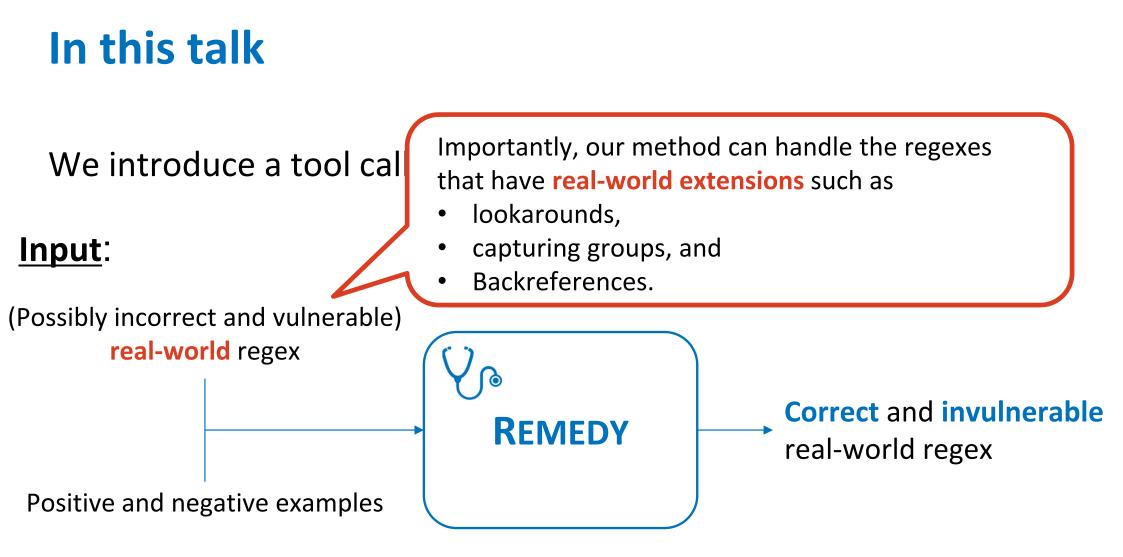
# **ReDoS** is a significant threat to our society

		CVE-2019-14232: Denial-of-service possibility in django       The web framework for perfectionists with deadlines.         If django.utils.text.Truncator's chars() and words() methods were passed the html=True argument, they were extremely slow to evaluate certain inputs due to a catastrophic backtracking vulnerability in a regular expression. The chars() and words() methods are used to implement the truncatechars_html and truncatewords_html te			
become exhausted on every CPU core that handles HTTP/HTTPS traffic on the					
	Status On July 20, 2016 we experienced a 34 minute outage starting at 14:44	<mark>4 UTC.</mark> It took 10 mi	CVE-2021-41817	• CVSS Severity Rating • Fix	
	identify the cause, 14 minutes to write the code to fix it, and 10 minutes to where Stack Overflow became available again.		Date.parse in the date gem through 3.2.0 for Ruby allows F 2.0.1.		ws ReDoS

### In this talk

We introduce a tool called REMEDY that rectifies this situation.





### **Challenges & Contributions**

#### **1.** The Definition of ReDoS vulnerability of real-world regexes

A novel formal semantics and the time complexity of backtracking matching algorithm for real-world regexes

#### 2. The Repair Problem

A novel condition called real-world strong 1-unambiguity (RWS1U) and formalize the corresponding PBE repair problem (RWS1U repair problem)

#### 3. Algorithm

An algorithm for solving the RWS1U repair problem

### Outline

- Real-World Regexes
- ReDoS Vulnerabilities of Real-World Regexes
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### <u>Syntax</u>: $r ::= [C] | \varepsilon | rr | r|r | r^*$ $| (r)_i | \langle i | (?=r) | (?!r) | (?<=x) | (?<!x)$

Syntax:  $r ::= \begin{bmatrix} C \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \varepsilon & |rr| & |r| \\ \varepsilon & |rr| & |r| \\ (r)_i & |\langle i | (?=r) & |(?!r) & |(?<=x) & |(?<!x) \end{bmatrix}$ 

**Real-world extensions** 

<u>Syntax</u>:

$$r ::= [C] | \varepsilon | rr | r|r | r^* | / (r)_i | \langle i | (?=r) | (?!r) | (?<=x) | (?$$

[C] is a character set. C is a set of characters. We sometimes write a for [{a}].

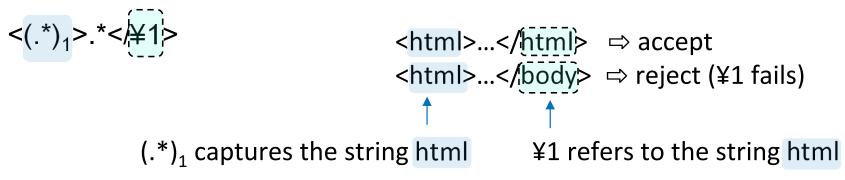
#### Example:

[a-cz] matches one of the characters a, b, c, and z.

Syntax: 
$$r ::= [C] | \varepsilon | rr | r | r | r^*$$
  
 $| (r)_i | \langle i | (?=r) | (?!r) | (?<=x) | (?$ 

(r)<sub>i</sub> is a capturing group and it stores the matched string with the index i.
 ¥i is a backreference and it refers to the string captured by (r)<sub>i</sub>.

#### Example:



**Syntax:** 
$$r ::= [C] | \varepsilon | rr | r | r | r^* | (r)_i | \langle i | (?=r) | (?!r) | (?<=x) | (?  
Lookaheads attempt to match r without any character consumption.  
Positive lookahead (?=r) succeeds if r succeeds.  
Negative lookahead (?!r) succeeds if r fails.$$

#### Example:

(?=.\*@).\*

foo@example.com ⇒ accept fooexamle.co.jp ⇒ reject

((?=.\*@) fails since there is no @)

Syntax: 
$$r ::= [C] | \varepsilon | rr | r | r | r^*$$
  
 $| (r)_i | \langle i | (?=r) | (?!r) | (?<=x) | (?$ 

Fixed-length Lookbehinds look back and attempt to match x without any character consumption.

#### Example:

.\*(?<!jp)

foo@example.com ⇒ accept fooexamle.co.jp ⇒ reject ((?<!jp) fails since the suffix is "jp".

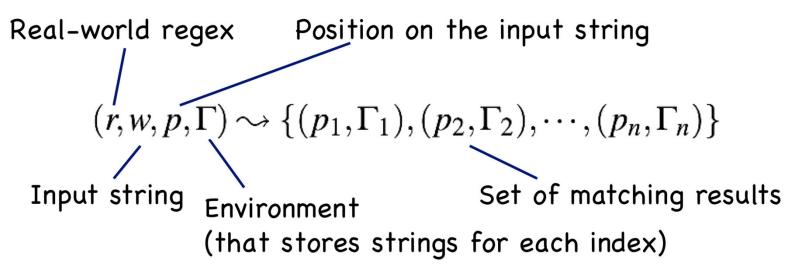
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### **ReDoS Vulnerabilities of Real-World Regexes**

ReDoS vulnerability concerns the complexity of backtracking matching algorithm.

Therefore, we define the semantics that models the behavior of backtracking matching algorithm by the matching relation  $\sim \rightarrow$ .



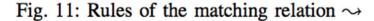
### **Rules of the Matching Relation**

 $\frac{p < |w| \quad w[p] \in C}{([C], w, p, \Gamma) \rightsquigarrow \{(p+1, \Gamma)\}} \text{ (Set of characters)}$   $\frac{p \ge |w| \lor w[p] \notin C}{([C], w, p, \Gamma) \rightsquigarrow \emptyset} \text{ (Set of characters Failure)}$   $\frac{p \ge |w| \lor w[p] \notin C}{([C], w, p, \Gamma) \rightsquigarrow \emptyset} \text{ (Set of characters Failure)}$   $\frac{(r_1, w, p, \Gamma) \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{N} \quad \forall (p_i, \Gamma_i) \in \mathcal{N}, \ (r_2, w, p_i, \Gamma_i) \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{N}_i}{(r_1 r_2, w, p, \Gamma) \rightsquigarrow \bigcup_{0 \le i < |\mathcal{N}|} \mathcal{N}_i} \text{ (Concatenation)}$   $\frac{(r_1, w, p, \Gamma) \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{N} \quad (r_2, w, p, \Gamma) \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{N}'}{(r_1 |r_2, w, p, \Gamma) \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{N} \cup \mathcal{N}'} \text{ (Union)}$   $\frac{(r_i, w, p, \Gamma) \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{N} \quad (r_i, w, p_i, \Gamma_i) \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{N}_i}{(r_i, w_i, p_i) \leftrightarrow \mathcal{N} \cup \mathcal{N}'} \text{ (Union)}$   $\frac{\forall (p_i, \Gamma_i) \in (\mathcal{N} \setminus \{(p, \Gamma)\}), \ (r^*, w, p_i, \Gamma_i) \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{N}_i}{(r^*, w, p, \Gamma) \rightsquigarrow \{(p, \Gamma)\} \cup \bigcup_{0 \le i < |(\mathcal{N} \setminus \{(p, \Gamma)\})|} \mathcal{N}_i} \text{ (Repetition)}$ 

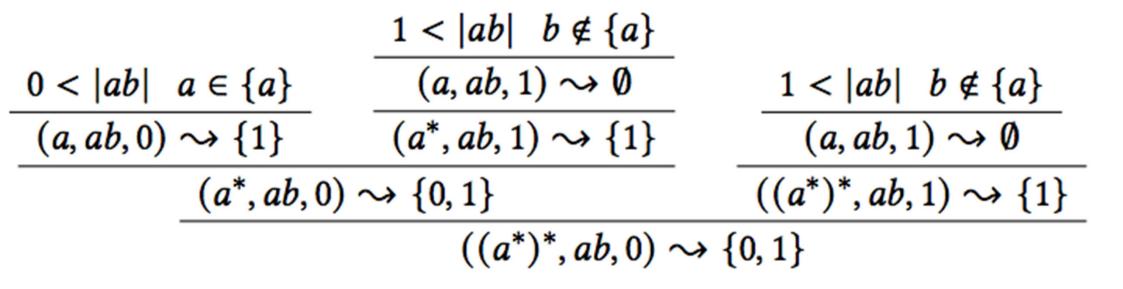
$$\frac{(r,w,p,\Gamma) \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{N}}{((r)_{j},w,p,\Gamma) \rightsquigarrow \{(p_{i},\Gamma_{i}|j \mapsto w[p..p_{i})]) \mid (p_{i},\Gamma_{i}) \in \mathcal{N}\}} (Capturing group)}{\frac{\Gamma(i) \neq \bot}{(\Gamma(i),w,p,\Gamma) \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{N}}} (Backreference)}{\frac{\Gamma(i) = \bot}{(\backslash i,w,p,\Gamma) \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{N}}} (Backreference Failure)}{\frac{(r,w,p,\Gamma) \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{N}}{((?=r),w,p,\Gamma) \rightsquigarrow \{(p,\Gamma') \mid (\_,\Gamma') \in \mathcal{N}\}}} (Positive lookahead)}{\frac{(r,w,p,\Gamma) \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{N}}{((?=r),w,p,\Gamma) \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{N}}}{((?=r),w,p,\Gamma) \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{N}' = ite(\mathcal{N} \neq \emptyset, \emptyset, \{(p,\Gamma)\})}{((?!r),w,p,\Gamma) \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{N}'}}$$

$$\frac{(x,w[p-|x|..p),0,\Gamma) \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{N}}{((?<=x),w,p,\Gamma) \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{N}'} = ite(\mathcal{N} \neq \emptyset, \{(p,\Gamma)\}, \emptyset)}{((?<=x),w,p,\Gamma) \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{N}'}$$

$$(Negative lookbehind)}{\frac{(x,w[p-|x|..p),0,\Gamma) \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{N}}{((?$$



# Example: Matching of (a\*)\* with the input string ab



### **ReDoS Vulnerabilities of Real-World Regexes**

#### Definition (Running time):

For a regex r and a string w, we define the *running time* of the backtracking matching algorithm on r and w, Time(r, w), to be the size of the derivation tree of  $(r, w, 0, \emptyset) \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{N}$ .

#### Definition (Vulnerable regexes):

We say that a regex r is vulnerable if  $Time(r, w) \notin O(|w|)$ .

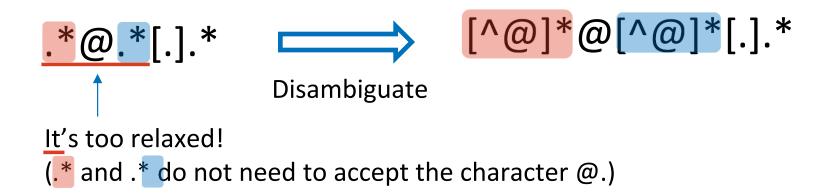
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#### How can we guarantee ReDoS invulnerability?

The root cause of ReDoS is backtrackings due to the ambiguity. ⇒ We modify a regex to eliminate the ambiguity.

**Regex for an email address**:



#### How can we guarantee ReDoS invulnerability?

The root cause of ReDoS is backtrackings due to the ambiguity.

 $\Rightarrow$  We modify a regex to eliminate the ambiguity.

We defined a grammatical condition sufficient to ensure ReDoS invulnerability called real-world strong 1-unambiguity (RWS1U).

Extension of strong 1-unambiguity [Koch and Scherzinger 2007]. We'll explain this next (see paper for formal def.)

### **Real-World Strong 1-Unambiguity (RWS1U)**

Lookahead removal:

 $[abc]^*(?=a) \setminus 1$ Replace lookaheads with  $\varepsilon$ 

#### **Bracketing**:

#### **Extended NFA translation**:

RWS1U enforces that the matching algorithm can determine which subexpression to match next by looking at the next character in the input string.

$$[abc]^* \setminus 1 \qquad \qquad [1[2([3abc]_3)^*]_2[4 \setminus 1]_4]_1$$

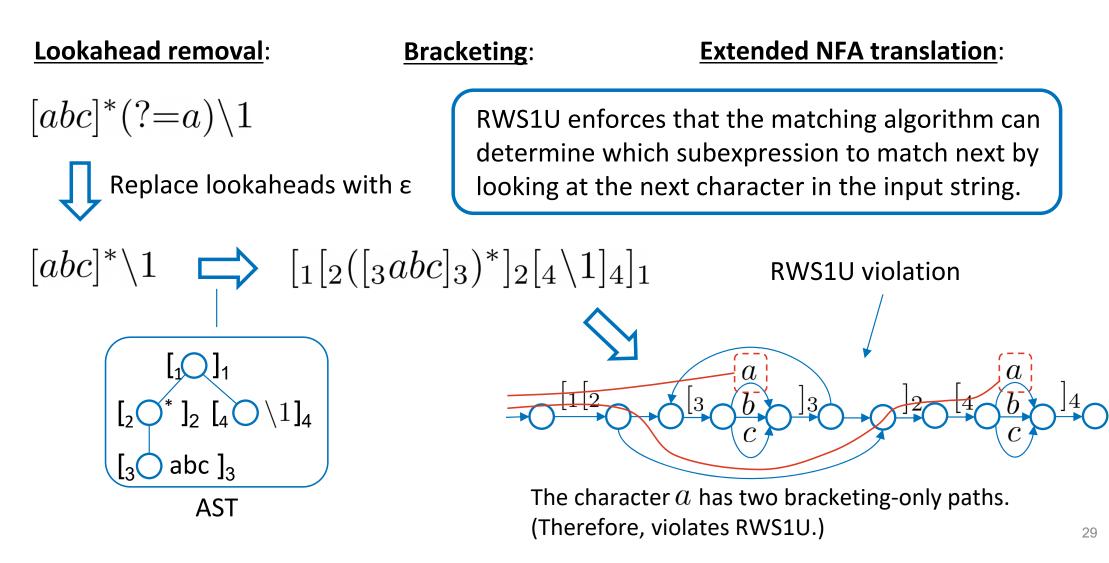
$$[10]_1$$

$$[20^*]_2[40 \setminus 1]_4$$

$$[30 abc]_3$$

$$AST$$

### **Real-World Strong 1-Unambiguity (RWS1U)**



# **RWS1U Repair Problem**

### Input:

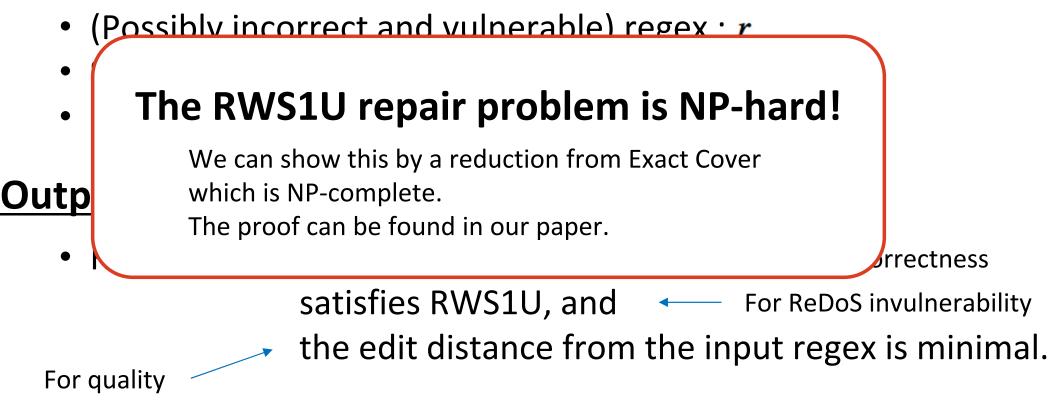
- (Possibly incorrect and vulnerable) regex : r
- Set of positive examples : P
- Set of negative examples : N

### Output:

Regex r' that is consistent with examples, For correctness satisfies RWS1U, and For ReDoS invulnerability
 The edit distance from the input regex is minimal.

### **RWS1U Repair Problem**

### Input:



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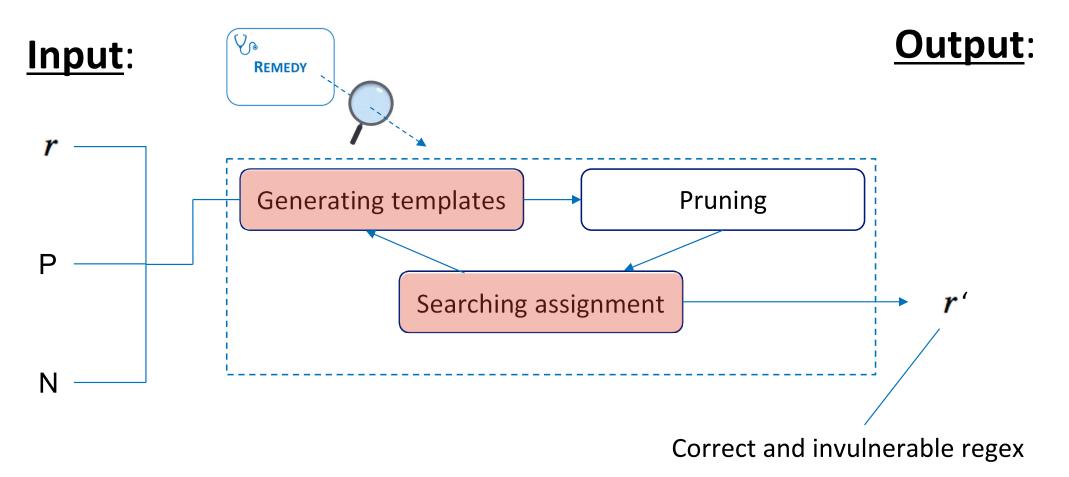
**Repair Algorithm** 

Our repair algorithm is

# Enumerative Search + Pruning by Approximations + SMT-based Constraint Solving

Builds on [Pan+ 2019].

# **High Level Repair Algorithm**



Generating templates

Searching assignment

Input:

- $r = \langle (.^*)_1 \rangle .^* \langle / \backslash 1 \rangle$
- P = {<ab></ab>, <a>ab</a>}
- N = {<a></b>, <a><b></a>, <a><ab></a>}

Generating templates

Searching assignment

**Input:**  $r = < (.*)_1 > .* < / (1 > P = {<ab></ab>, <a>ab</a>}, N = {<a></b>, <a><b></b></a>, <a><ab></a>}$ 

• Replace the subexpressions with holes □

# $<(.^*)_1>.^*</\backslash 1> \implies <(\square_1^*)_1>\square_2^*</\backslash 1>$

After some iterations

Generating templates

Searching assignment

**Input:**  $r = <(.^*)_1 > .^* < /(1 > P = \{<ab></ab>, <a>ab</a>\}, N = \{<a></b>, <a><b></b></a>, <a><ab></a>}$ 

• Checks if the template can be instantiated to a regex that satisfies the required conditions by replacing its holes with some sets of characters

$$<(\Box_1^*)_1>\Box_2^*$$

Try to replace  $\Box$  with [C].

Generating templates

Searching assignment

**Input:**  $r = < (.*)_1 > .* < / (1 > P = {<ab></ab>, <a>ab</a>}, N = {<a></b>, <a><b></b></a>, <a><ab></a>}$ 

• Checks if the template can be instantiated to a regex that satisfies the required conditions by replacing its holes with some sets of characters



Generating templates

Searching assignment

**Input:**  $r = <(.^*)_1 > .^* < /(1 > P = \{<ab></ab>, <a>ab</a>\}, N = \{<a></b>, <a><b></b></a>, <a>ab></a>}$ 

• Checks if the template can be instantiated to a regex that satisfies the required conditions by replacing its holes with some sets of characters

$$< (\square_{1}^{*})_{1} > \square_{2}^{*} < / \backslash 1 > \square \Rightarrow ( \frac{\phi_{p}^{1} \land \phi_{p}^{2}}{\rho_{p}^{2}} \land (\neg \phi_{n}^{1} \land \neg \phi_{n}^{2} \land \neg \phi_{n}^{3})$$

$$Constraints for P$$

$$P = \{  , ab \} \qquad ( v_{1}^{a} \land v_{1}^{b}) \land (v_{1}^{a} \land (v_{2}^{a} \land v_{2}^{b}))$$

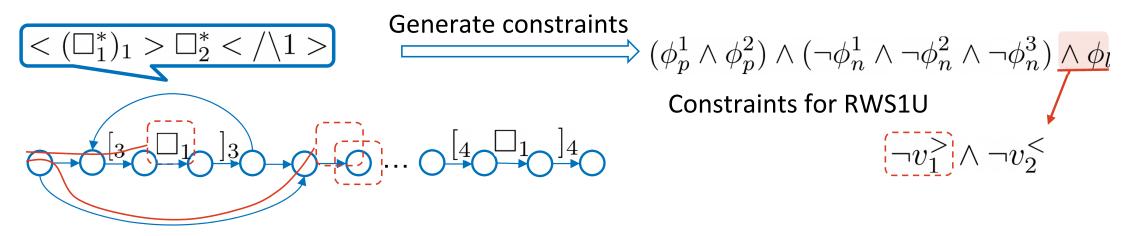
 $\square_1$  can be replaced with the character set that contains a and b.

Generating templates

Searching assignment

**Input:**  $r = < (.*)_1 > .* < / (1 > P = {<ab></ab>, <a>ab</a>}, N = {<a></b>, <a><b></b></a>, <a><ab></a>}$ 

Checks if there are multiple bracketing-only paths for for each [i that reach a same character



Generating templates

Searching assignment

**Input:**  $r = <(.^*)_1 > .^* < /(1 > P = \{<ab></ab>, <a>ab</a>\}, N = \{<a></b>, <a>a><b></b>, <a>a><ab></a>\}$ 

• Checks if the template can be instantiated to a regex that satisfies the required conditions by replacing its holes with some sets of characters

$$< (\Box_1^*)_1 > \Box_2^* < / \backslash 1 > \square \implies (\phi_p^1 \land \phi_p^2) \land (\neg \phi_n^1 \land \neg \phi_n^2 \land \neg \phi_n^3) \land \phi_l$$
  
If it is satisfiable, replace  $\Box$  with the character set.  
$$< ([^>]^*)_1 > [^<]^* < / \backslash 1 >$$

### **Evaluation**

#### **Research Questions**:

Can REMEDY repair vulnerable regexes efficiently?
 Can REMEDY find high-quality regexes?

#### Benchmark:

. . .

ReDoS data set [Davis+ 2018]

• It contains real-world regexes in Node.js (JavaScript) and Python core libraries.

#### **RQ1.** Can REMEDY repair vulnerable regexes efficiently?

#### REMEDY could solved 82.1% of regexes within 0.97 seconds on average.

	Solved(179) Average(s)		
REMEDY	132	1.54	
REMEDY-0	119	1.08	
REMEDY-h	147	0.97	

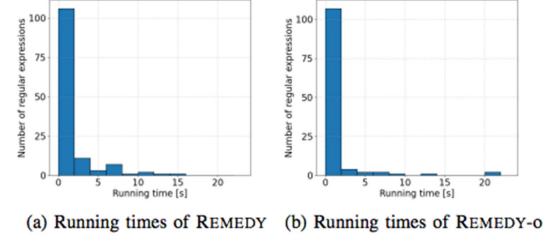
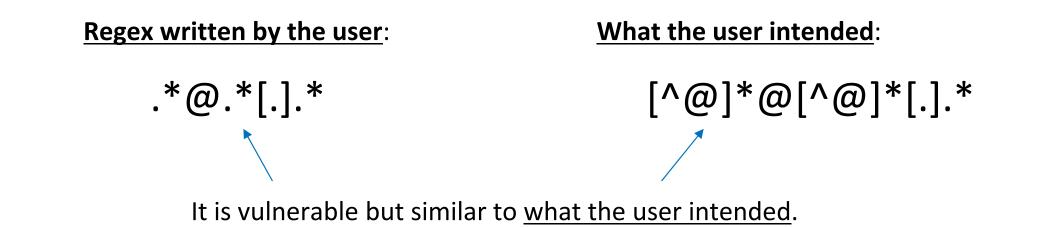


Fig. 6: Results of the repairs.

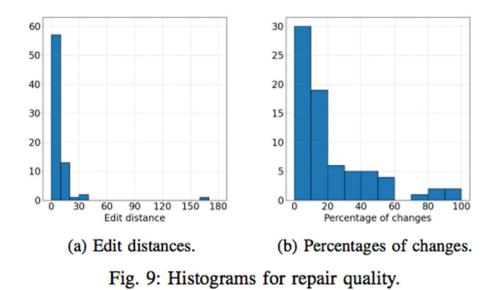
#### Regarding RQ2: What is "high-quality"?

In PBE scenario, the user wants to obtain what the user intended as output. Therefore, the repairs that are similar to the original ones are often considered good in PBE scenario [Pan+ 2019].



#### **RQ2.** Can REMEDY find high-quality regexes?

About 81% of regexes were repaired within the small edit distances (12). Additionally, the average ratio of change was 24.3%.



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### Conclusion

We introduced

- 1. the definition of ReDoS vulnerability of real-world regexes,
- 2. the condition for ReDoS invulnerability and the repair problem, and
- **3.** the algorithm for solving the repair problem.



github.com/NariyoshiChida/SP2022