Usable Optimistic Fair Exchange

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Abstract. Fairly exchanging digital content is an everyday problem. It has been shown that fair exchange cannot be done without a trusted third party (called the *Arbiter*). Yet, even with a trusted party, it is still non-trivial to come up with an efficient solution, especially one that can be used in a p2p file sharing system with a high volume of data exchanged.

We provide an efficient optimistic fair exchange mechanism for bartering digital files, where receiving a payment in return to a file (buying) is also considered fair. The exchange is optimistic, removing the need for the Arbiter's involvement unless a dispute occurs. While the previous solutions employ costly cryptographic primitives for every file or block exchanged, our protocol employs them only once per peer, therefore achieving $O(n)$ efficiency improvement when n blocks are exchanged between two peers. The rest of our protocol uses very efficient cryptography, making it perfectly suitable for a p2p file sharing system where *tens* of peers exchange *thousands* of blocks and they do not know beforehand which ones they will end up exchanging. Therefore, our system yields to one-two orders of magnitude improvement in terms of both computation and communication (80 seconds vs. 84 minutes, 1.6MB vs. 100MB). Thus, for the first time, a provably secure (and privacy respecting when payments are made using e-cash) fair exchange protocol is being used in real bartering applications (e.g., BitTorrent) [14] without sacrificing performance.

1 Introduction

Fairly exchanging digital content is an everyday problem. A fair exchange scenario commonly involves Alice and Bob. Alice has something that Bob wants, and Bob has something that Alice wants. A fair exchange protocol guarantees that at the end either each of them obtains what (s)he wants, or neither of them does (see [40] for more details and examples).

In this paper, we consider a general file exchange (bartering) scenario, inspired by the BitTorrent [22] peer-to-peer file sharing protocol. Alice has several files (BitTorrent blocks) of interest to Bob, and Bob has several files (blocks) of interest to Alice. They do not know ahead of time how many or which blocks they will end up exchanging. They want to perform a fair exchange: Alice should get Bob's file (block) if and only if Bob gets Alice's file (block). In a signature fair exchange [4,3,2], there is a verification mechanism (i.e., the public key) that enables the sender to verifiably encrypt the signature so that the receiver can check that the encrypted signature verifies. No such efficient verifiable encryption method is currently known for exchanging files. Therefore, a compensation is required after the fact if one of the parties cheat. In our scenario, we

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are assuming that Alice/Bob will be equally happy to get a payment in return to her/his file. Thus, exchanging a file with a payment (buying) is also considered fair, as in some previous works [4,8,18,37,36].

One of the hardest points in creating a usable optimistic fair exchange protocol suitable for p2p file sharing applications is that the peers to contact and the content to exchange are not pre-defined. BitTorrent clients keep connecting to different peers to obtain different blocks. Fault-tolerance issues, connectivity problems, and availability of data blocks are all factors affecting from whom which block should be obtained. Our protocol uniquely addresses these issues by removing the need to know what content to exchange with whom beforehand.

In a nutshell, in our protocol, Alice sends a verifiable escrow of a payment (e.g., e-coin) to Bob first. Then, they exchange encrypted files. Afterward, Alice sends Bob an escrow of her key with her signature on the escrow. Then, Bob sends Alice the key to his file. Finally, Alice sends Bob the key to her file. Since Bob has a verifiable escrow of an e-coin and an escrow of a key before he sends his key to Alice, he is protected. In the worst case, if Alice does not provide the correct key and the key escrow contains garbage, Bob can go to the Arbiter and obtain Alice's payment. The escrow of the payment cannot contain garbage, because it was formed using a *verifiable* escrow. After the exchange of the verifiable escrow, the rest of our protocol can be repeated as many times as necessary to exchange multiple files (even if the number and content of the files were not known in advance), unless there is a dispute.

We provide two versions of the protocol: In the first one (the one described briefly above) only one party provides a verifiable escrow. This version requires the use of timeouts for dispute resolution purposes. We provide another version that needs both parties to provide verifiable escrows but requires no timeouts. Both versions are very efficient since they use only *one* (resp. *two*) expensive primitives (verifiable escrow and payment) regardless of the number of files exchanged. We stress the fact that our timeouts can be very large (e.g., one day or week) to allow for unexpected situations in which the participants act honestly (e.g., network failure), and thus require very loose synchronization (e.g., one hour difference), and users can freely participate in other exchanges without waiting for the timeout.

Previous Work: It is well-known that a fair exchange protocol is impossible without a trusted third party (TTP) [43] (called the *Arbiter*) that ensures that Alice cannot take advantage of Bob, and vice versa. Without loss of generality, Alice will have to send the last message of the protocol, and we want to protect Bob in case she chooses not to do so. Without an arbiter, gradual release type of protocols where parties send pieces to each other in rounds can provide only weaker forms of fairness, and are much less efficient [11,13].

Luckily, the impossibility result [43] does not require that the Arbiter be involved in each transaction, but simply that the Arbiter exists. If Alice and Bob are both well-behaved, there is no need for the Arbiter to do anything (or even know an exchange took place). Micali [39], Asokan, Schunter and Waidner [2], and Asokan, Shoup and Waidner [4,3] investigated this *optimistic* fair exchange scenario in which the Arbiter gets involved only in case of a dispute. Two such protocols [4,30] were analyzed in [46] (see also [7]).

Asokan, Shoup and Waidner (ASW) [4] gave the first provably secure and completely fair optimistic exchange protocol for exchanging digital signatures. Later on, Belenkiy et al. [8] gave a protocol for buying digital content in exchange for e-cash, building on top of the ASW protocol. They provided an optimization for the Arbiter so that, unlike in the ASW protocol, the amount of work that the Arbiter is required to do depends only logarithmically on the size of the file. They also assume there is an additional TTP (which we call the *Tracker*) that provides a means of verification that the file actually contains the right content (e.g., using hashes). Such entities certifying hashes already exist in current BitTorrent systems [22].

Belenkiy et al. [8] used e-cash (introduced by Chaum [20]), in particular, endorsed e-cash [18] in their constructions. The reason is that other forms of payments (signatures or electronic checks used in [4,37]) do not provide any privacy. In our protocols, any form of payment can be employed, but we will also use endorsed e-cash in our sample instantiation since it is efficient and anonymous.

Contributions: We present the most efficient fair exchange known to us, where *the efficiency is comparable to a simple unfair exchange if performed multiple times between the same pair of users, even when peers do not know beforehand which blocks they will end up exchanging*. Using the best previous work (Belenkiy et al. barter protocol [8]), n pairs of blocks can be exchanged using n transactions, each of which requires a costly step involving expensive cryptographic primitives (a verifiable escrow and an e-coin). Our contribution is a very efficient fair exchange protocol using which this can be done with only *one* (or *two* if we do not want to employ timeouts) step in total that involves the same expensive primitives (verifiable escrow and payment). This is a property that is unique to our protocol: Instead of employing the costly primitives for every file or block that is exchanged, we employ them once per peer, even when peers do not know beforehand which blocks they will end up exchanging. Then, exchanging multiple files/blocks between peers involves only very efficient cryptography (i.e., symmetric- and public-key encryption, and digital signatures). In a real setting where BitTorrent peers exchange thousands of blocks with only tens of peers, there is *one or two orders of magnitude improvement in terms of both computation and communication* (80 seconds vs. 84 minutes computational overhead and 1.6MB vs. 100MB communication overhead for a 2.8GB file —for detailed numbers, see Section 3.2). This means that, with no (i.e., neglectable) efficiency loss, our fair exchange protocol can be used to exchange files instead of the unfair protocol currently used by BitTorrent or similar file sharing protocols.

We stress the fact that the timeouts used for dispute resolution purposes in one of our protocols can be very large (e.g., one day or week) to allow for unexpected situations in which the participants act honestly (e.g., network failure), and thus require very loose synchronization (e.g., one hour difference), and *users can freely participate in other exchanges without waiting for the timeout*.

We take the idea of using verifiable escrow from ASW [4], and the subprotocols of Belenkiy et al. [8] that increase the efficiency of the Arbiter (proving and disproving keys). The Arbiter does absolutely no work in our protocols, as long as no dispute occurs. *Our protocols can make use of any type of payments*, but we will show an instantiation using e-cash since it also provides privacy. Our performance evaluation

numbers will use endorsed e-cash [18] as the payment mechanism. Note that other (non-anonymous) forms of payments (e.g., electronic checks [21]) will be more efficient.

Our additional contribution is definitional. We give a general definition of fair exchange of digital content (not just digital signatures) provided that it can be verified using some verification algorithm (defined in Section 2.2). Furthermore, our fairness definition covers polynomially many exchanges between an honest party and an adversary controlling polynomially-many other participants (see [27] for an example fair exchange protocol that is fair for a single exchange but stops being fair in a multi-user setting). We then prove our protocol's security based on this definition. We sum up the most important properties of our protocols below.

Security of our protocol: Our protocols provably satisfy the following condition (waiting for at most one timeout period if timeouts are used, or without waiting at all if no timeouts are used), as long as at least one of the trading parties (Alice and Bob) is honest:

- Either Alice and Bob both get their corresponding files,
- Or Alice gets Bob's file and Bob gets Alice's payment (turns into a buy protocol in effect),
- Or neither of them gets anything.

Efficiency of our protocol: We have the following properties regarding efficiency:

- An honest user can reuse her e-coin for other exchanges without waiting for the completion of the protocol.
- The overhead of our costly step – verifiable escrow and e-cash – is constant $O(1)$, instead of linear $O(n)$ as in previous best results, when n files or blocks are exchanged.

Already, the Brownie Project [14] is using our protocols in their BitTorrent deployment.

2 Definitions

Barter is an exchange of two items, which are digital files in our case. We assume that the reader is familiar with encryption and signature schemes, and hash functions.

2.1 Notation

An escrow is a ciphertext under the public key of some trusted third party (TTP). A *verifiable* escrow [4,19,15] means that the recipient can verify that the contents of the ciphertext satisfy some relation (therefore stating that the ciphertext contains the expected content). A contract (a.k.a. label, condition, or tag) attached to such a ciphertext defines the conditions under which the TTP should decrypt and give away the encrypted secret [47]. The label is public and it is integrated with the ciphertext in a such way that it cannot be modified. We will use $E_{Arb}(a;b)$ to denote an escrow of the secret a under the Arbiter's public key, with the contract b. Similarly, $VE_{Arb}(a;b)$ will denote a verifiable escrow.

Any payment protocol that can efficiently be verifiably escrowed and is secure can be used in our protocols. Furthermore, if privacy is desired, the payments should be anonymous as in e-cash [20]. We provide an instantiation using endorsed e-cash [18] (which is an extension of compact e-cash [17]), since it satisfies all these requirements. Endorsed e-cash splits a coin into an unendorsed coin (denoted $coin'$) and endorsement (denoted *end*). One can think of $coin'$ as an encrypted coin and *end* as the key. One can check if the endorsement *end* in a given verifiable escrow [19] matches the given unendorsed coin $coin'$ (without learning the endorsement *end*). Furthermore, given only the unendorsed part $coin'$, no other party (except the owner) can come up with a valid endorsement *end*. Endorsed e-cash moreover has the ability to catch double-spenders. Hence, if one uses two different $coin', end$ pairs trying to spend the same coin twice, (s)he will be caught (and, since her identity is revealed, can be punished). Note that if a party tries to deposit the same coin twice (using the same $coin', end$ pair), the operation can easily be denied by checking against a list of past transactions. Lastly, only matching $coin', end$ pairs can be linked, unendorsed coins and endorsements prepared for different exchanges remain unlinkable.

Wherever used, K_P will denote a symmetric key of a party P, generated through an encryption scheme's key generation algorithm. We let $c = Enc_K(f)$ denote that the ciphertext c is an encryption of the plaintext f under the symmetric key K. Similarly, $f = Dec_K(c)$ will denote that the plaintext f is the decryption of the ciphertext c under the symmetric key K. Our protocol can make use of any secure symmetric encryption scheme (see the book by Katz and Lindell [33] for definitions and constructions).

Let pk_P and sk_P denote public and secret keys for a party P. Then $sign_{sk}(x)$ will denote a signature on x under the secret key sk which can be verified using the corresponding public key pk. Our protocol can make use of any secure public-key encryption scheme [24,28] and any secure signature scheme [31].

Furthermore, let H_k be a family of (universal one-way) hash functions [41], where k is the security parameter, and let *hash* be a hash function uniformly choosen from the family H_k of hash functions. Then, $h_x = hash(x)$ will denote that h_x is the hash of x under the hash function *hash*. We now introduce a definition we frequently use in the paper.

Definition 1. *We say that a key K* ***decrypts correctly****, or is the* ***correct key*** *with respect to a plaintext hash h_f and a ciphertext c, if the plaintext $f' = Dec_K(c)$ has the property $hash(f') = h_f$.*

Finally, a negligible probability denotes a probability that is a negligible function of the security parameter (e.g., the key-length of an encryption scheme). A negligible function of n is a function which is smaller than any inverse polynomial over n with $n > N$ for sufficiently large N (e.g., $neg(n) = 2^{-n}$).

2.2 (Optimistic) Fair Exchange

In this section we will give a general definition of fair exchange. Unlike in ASW, our definitions will not be specific to signature exchange, and we will consider polynomially-many exchanges between an honest user and an adversary controlling polynomially-many other users. Furthermore, we separate and clearly define the roles of all trusted

parties. While providing models and definitions for a general framework of (optimistic) fair exchange applicable to a broad range of protocols, we will also show its extensions to our case.

MODEL: The model is adapted from the ASW definition [4], with clarifications and generalizations. There are three players; *Alice* and *Bob* exchanging two digital items, and the *Arbiter*[1] for conflict resolution. All players are assumed to be polynomial time interactive Turing machines. We make no assumption about the underlying network capability.[2] Any message that does not confirm with the protocol specification will be discarded by the honest parties. Any input which does not verify according to the protocol will be resolved as stated by the protocol or the protocol will be aborted if no resolution is applicable. It is important that the Arbiter resolves conflicts on the same exchange *atomically*.[3] Thus, it will only interact with either Alice or Bob at any given time instance, until that interaction ends as specified by the protocol.[4] Sensitive communication (e.g., exchange of decryption keys for files or endorsement of an e-coin) will be carried out over a secure (and possibly authenticated) channel (e.g., SSL can be used to connect to the Arbiter, a secure key exchange with no public key infrastructure can be used for the communication between Alice and Bob).

For protocols using a *timeout*[5], we assume that the adversary cannot prevent the honest party from reaching the Arbiter before the timeout. If no timeouts are defined, we assume the adversary cannot prevent the honest party from reaching the Arbiter eventually. Hence, the honest party is assumed to be able to reach the Arbiter as defined by the protocol. Even with timeouts, this is not an unrealistic assumption since our timeouts can be large (e.g., one day or week).

In our model, we have two additional players, namely the *Tracker* (also in [4,8,22])[6] providing verification algorithms, and the *Bank* dealing with monetary parts of the system.

SETUP PHASE: Before the fair exchange protocol is run, we assume there is a setup phase. In this one-time pre-exchange phase, the Arbiter generates his public-private key pair (for the (verifiable) escrow schemes) and publishes his public key(s) so that both Alice and Bob obtain it. Optionally, the Arbiter may learn public keys of Alice and Bob in the setup phase, but our focus is on the case where the Arbiter does not need to know anything (and learns almost nothing) about Alice or Bob. *The adversary*

[1] One of the TTPs in ASW.

[2] Clients will have a local *message timeout* mechanism like the TCP timeout, which is small (e.g., one minute). The receiver deals with a *message timeout* exactly as it would deal with a non-verifying input.

[3] We present a trade-off between non-atomicity and performance of the Arbiter later on.

[4] For ease of the Arbiter to find the correct exchange, a random exchange ID can be incorporated into the messages. Since this is only a minor implementation efficiency issue, we do not want to complicate our definitions with that.

[5] This is not the *message timeout*, it is the *timeout* specified by the protocol, which is generally much longer (e.g., one day or week).

[6] ASW has the corresponding TTP in their file exchange scheme. In their signature exchange protocol, the public key infrastructure providing the public keys can be seen as the Tracker.

cannot interfere with the setup phase.[7] In the setup phase, the Bank and the Tracker also generate their public-private key pairs and publish their public keys.

Definition 2. *Let* SP *denote the security parameters of the system (e.g., key lengths of the primitives used). Let* PP *denote all the public values in the system, including* SP*, public keys of the trusted parties, and possibly some public parameters. Let* $\mathsf{PPGen}(\mathsf{SP})$ *be the randomized procedure which generates the public values given the security parameters. Then, define our* $\mathsf{PP} = (pk_{arb}, pk_{bank}, pk_{tracker}, timeout, \mathsf{SP}$*, and additional parameters for primitives used).*

From now on, we need to talk about multiple exchanges taking place. Alice has files $f_A^{(1)}, .., f_A^{(n)}$ to be exchanged with Bob, and Bob has $f_B^{(1)}, .., f_B^{(n)}$ to be exchanged with Alice (n is a polynomial in SP).[8] In general, we can consider these files as some strings in $\{0,1\}^*$, therefore consider fair exchange of anything that is verifiable. Without loss of generality, the Tracker gives Alice a *verification algorithm* $V_{f_B^{(i)}}$ for each file $f_B^{(i)}$, and Bob a verification algorithm $V_{f_A^{(i)}}$ for each file $f_A^{(i)}$ before the exchange takes place.

Assume that the content to be exchanged and associated verification algorithms are output by a generation algorithm $\mathsf{Gen}(\mathsf{SP})$ that takes the security parameters as input and outputs some content to be exchanged, with associated verification algorithms, and possibly some public information about the content. This procedure involves a trusted party H and the Tracker. The parties trust the Tracker in that any input accepted by that verification algorithm will be the content they want. In other words, they are going to be happy with any content that verifies under that verification algorithm. In particular, the content generation process is trusted. The adversary cannot generate "junk" files and ask the Tracker to create verification algorithms for them. BitTorrent forum sites and ratings provide a level of defense against this in practice.

Definition 3. *Content and verification algorithms are secure if* $\forall$ *PPT adversaries* $\mathcal{A}$ *and* $\forall$ *auxiliary inputs* $z \in \{0,1\}^{poly(\mathsf{SP})}$ *we have (over the randomness of the generation algorithms, the adversary, and possibly the verification algorithms)*

$$Pr[\mathsf{PP} \leftarrow \mathsf{PPGen}(\mathsf{SP}); (f_H^{(1)}, V_{f_H^{(1)}}, pub_{f_H^{(1)}}, .., f_H^{(n)}, V_{f_H^{(n)}}, pub_{f_H^{(n)}}) \leftarrow \mathsf{Gen}(\mathsf{SP});$$
$$(f_{\mathcal{A}}^{(1)}, .., f_{\mathcal{A}}^{(n)}) \leftarrow \mathcal{A}(V_{f_H^{(1)}}, pub_{f_H^{(1)}}, .., V_{f_H^{(n)}}, pub_{f_H^{(n)}}, \mathsf{PP}, z) :$$
$$\exists i \in [1..n] \quad | \quad (V_{f_H^{(i)}}(f_H^{(i)}) \neq accept \vee V_{f_H^{(i)}}(f_{\mathcal{A}}^{(i)}) = accept)] = neg(\mathsf{SP})$$

The definition above models the case in which the files to be exchanged cannot be found by the adversary by some other means[9] (and hence exchanging files makes

[7] This is the standard trusted setup assumption that says Alice and Bob have the correct public key of the Arbiter.

[8] Note that Alice or Bob can represent multiple entities controlled by the adversary.

[9] We assume that the adversary cannot just "guess" an honest participant's file, in which case the exchange is trivially unfair.

sense for the adversary), even with the help of associated verification algorithms and public information[10].

To provide evidence on the generality and applicability of our definition, we present several example verification algorithms for various tasks. For example, a file verification can be performed using hashes. So, each verification algorithm $V_{f_A^{(i)}}$ for Alice's file $f_A^{(i)}$ contains the definition of hash function used –*hash*–[11], and the hash value $h_{f_A^{(i)}} = hash(f_A^{(i)})$. The i^{th} verification algorithm computes the hash of the given input according to the description of the hash function, and accepts it if and only if the computed hash matches $h_{f_A^{(i)}}$. As another example, consider the ASW signature exchange protocol, in which each verification algorithm contains the signature scheme's description[11], the signature public key of Alice pk_A[11], and the message m_i to be signed. When it receives a signature as input, the i^{th} verification accepts the signature if and only if it is a valid signature on message m_i under the public key pk_A using the signature scheme. As yet another example, an e-coin verification algorithm can take a coin to verify, and use the Bank's public key while verifying the non-interactive proofs given. Such an algorithm is a part of the specification of every e-cash scheme (e.g., see [18,17]). Verifiable encryption schemes (e.g., [19]) and, in general, proof systems also specify a verification algorithm in their definitions. Such algorithms can be used directly in a fair exchange protocol, satisfying our definition as long as they are secure according to Definition 3.

To summarize, in the setup phase, public values are generated using $\mathsf{PPGen}(\mathsf{SP})$. The files and the verification algorithms are generated jointly by the Tracker and some trusted content generator (e.g., movie distributor) using the $\mathsf{Gen}(\mathsf{SP})$ procedure. In the context of BitTorrent, this means that we trust the content generator about the content, and the Tracker about the verification algorithms. A "highly rated" BitTorrent user will be trusted about the content, or alternatively, comments on the forum sites will warn against bogus content. From now on, we assume the content and the verification algorithms used are secure and trusted.

Definition 4. ***Fair Exchange Protocol:*** *A fair exchange protocol is composed of three interactive algorithms: Alice running algorithm A, Bob running algorithm B, and the Arbiter running the trusted algorithm T. The content and verification algorithms used need to be secure according to Definition 3. The security of the exchange is then defined in terms of completeness (when Alice and Bob are both honest) and fairness (when either Alice or Bob is malicious).*

COMPLETENESS for a (non-optimistic) fair exchange states that the interactive run of A, B and T by *honest parties* results in A getting B's files and B getting A's files (assuming an ideal network):

[10] For example, if movies are being exchanged, a lot of information is publicly available about such a movie file, such as actors, length, and release date. But these do not enable people to come up those movie files.

[11] Possibly different for each verification algorithm.

$$Pr[(f_B^{(1)},..,f_B^{(n)}) \leftarrow A(f_A^{(1)},..,f_A^{(n)},V_{f_B^{(I)}},..,V_{f_B^{(n)}},\mathsf{PP}) \overset{T(sk_{arb})}{\longleftrightarrow}$$
$$B(f_B^{(1)},..,f_B^{(n)},V_{f_A^{(I)}},..,V_{f_A^{(n)}},\mathsf{PP}) \rightarrow (f_A^{(1)},..,f_A^{(n)})] = 1$$

where the notation describes that A, B and T can all communicate (in a three-way interaction) following the protocol, and at the end A outputs $f_B^{(i)}$ and B outputs $f_A^{(i)}$ for all $i : 1..n$.

OPTIMISTIC COMPLETENESS for an optimistic fair exchange states that the interactive run of A and B by *honest parties* results in A getting $f_B^{(i)}$ and B getting $f_A^{(i)}$ for all $i : 1..n$ (the Arbiter's algorithm T is not involved, assuming an ideal network). A protocol satisfying optimistic completeness also satisfies completeness. Our *optimistic completeness* definition is:

$$Pr[(f_B^{(1)},..,f_B^{(n)}) \leftarrow A(f_A^{(1)},..,f_A^{(n)},V_{f_B^{(I)}},..,V_{f_B^{(n)}},\mathsf{PP}) \leftrightarrow$$
$$B(f_B^{(1)},..,f_B^{(n)},V_{f_A^{(I)}},..,V_{f_A^{(n)}},\mathsf{PP}) \rightarrow (f_A^{(1)},..,f_A^{(n)})] = 1$$

Fairness states that at the end of the protocol, either Alice and Bob both get content that passes the verification algorithms given to them, or neither Alice nor Bob gets anything that passes the verification, in each of the n exchanges, even when one of them is malicious.[12] This definition is easy to satisfy using a (non-optimistic) fair exchange protocol since Alice and Bob can both hand their files to the Arbiter, and then the Arbiter can send Bob's files to Alice and Alice's files to Bob, if they pass respective verifications. Thus, below, we will define the more interesting case; fairness for an *optimistic* fair exchange. It is important to note that the ASW definition of fairness applies only to a single exchange, whereas our definition covers polynomially-many exchanges between an honest party and other players all controlled by the adversary.

FAIRNESS: We have an honest player H, and an adversarial player $\mathcal{A}$. The honest player runs algorithm A in exchanges where he plays the role of Alice, algorithm B in exchanges where he plays the role of Bob, and the Arbiter runs the algorithm T, all as defined by the protocol. H has files $f_H^{(1)},..,f_H^{(n)}$ to be exchanged with the adversary, and $\mathcal{A}$ has $f_{\mathcal{A}}^{(1)},..,f_{\mathcal{A}}^{(n)}$ to be exchanged with H. The adversary is assumed to control all other players, and hence all interactions of the honest player are with parties controlled by the adversary, which is the worst possible scenario covering multiple exchanges.

First there is the trusted setup phase as explained above, getting the security parameters as input, generating secure content and verification algorithms, along with some associated public information, and giving the appropriate values to each party. Since the setup phase is trusted, $\forall i : 1..nV_{f_H^{(i)}},V_{f_{\mathcal{A}}^{(i)}},\mathsf{PP}$ are trusted. Then parties proceed with the fairness game explained below, the honest party outputting X and the adversary outputting Y. At the end of the game, we require the fairness condition holds on X,Y, the verification algorithms $V_{f_H^{(I)}},V_{f_{\mathcal{A}}^{(I)}},..,V_{f_H^{(n)}},V_{f_{\mathcal{A}}^{(n)}}$, and the public values PP with high probability against all PPT adversaries $\mathcal{A}$, and all polynomially-long auxiliary inputs.

$$Pr\,[\,\text{Setup; FairnessGame: FairnessCondition}\,] = 1 - neg(\mathsf{SP})$$

[12] On the contrary, completeness definition only deals with honest participants.

FAIRNESS GAME: There are three types of interaction in our fairness game. Type 1 interactions are between H and $\mathcal{A}$. Type 2 interactions are between H and T. Type 3 interactions are between $\mathcal{A}$ and T.[13] The adversary can arbitrarily interleave type $1,2,3$ interactions, but cannot prevent type 2 interactions from happening until the timeout if timeouts are used, or eventually otherwise. The game ends when the honest party H produces its final output (including aborts and resolutions) in all the started protocols. Without loss of generality, in the fairness game we assume both parties want to exchange different content in different exchanges ($\forall i \neq j \quad f_H^{(i)} \neq f_H^{(j)}$ and $f_{\mathcal{A}}^{(i)} \neq f_{\mathcal{A}}^{(j)}$ and $\forall i, j \quad f_H^{(i)} \neq f_{\mathcal{A}}^{(j)}$).[14]

FAIRNESS CONDITION: Recall that the honest party's output was X and the adversary's output was Y at the end of the fairness game. A general fairness condition would be $\forall i : 1..n \quad [\exists x \in X : V_{f_{\mathcal{A}}^{(i)}}(x) = accept \Leftrightarrow \exists y \in Y : V_{f_H^{(i)}}(y) = accept]$ meaning that either H and $\mathcal{A}$ both get what they want or both don't, in each exchange.

Our protocol with payments has a very straightforward generalization of the fairness property. Our fairness condition states that either they both parties get each other's file, or one of them gets the other's file whereas the other gets his payment, or they both get nothing at each exchange. We believe that a broad range of optimistic fair exchange protocols can adapt the definition above using straightforward extensions whenever necessary.

TIMELY RESOLUTION: Lastly, as pointed out by ASW [4], an optimistic fair exchange protocol must provide timely resolution: Alice and Bob must be able to have disputes resolved within a finite and limited time. In our protocol without timeouts, resolution is immediate. In our protocol with timeouts, we guarantee resolution at the timeout (which is finite and fixed). We furthermore show that timeouts do not render our system less usable (Alice and Bob can freely participate in other exchanges without waiting for the timeout), and so in general we can use our more efficient protocol with timeouts.

3 Efficient Optimistic Barter Protocol

3.1 Barter with Timeouts

We will show a particular instantiation of our protocol, using endorsed e-cash [18] as the payment and hashes as the file verification algorithms. Full version of our

[13] In the implementation, T may need to have a way to differentiate which one of Alice and Bob he is talking to, which can easily be done in our protocols without learning who Alice and Bob are. When necessary, using one-way function values whose pre-image is known by only one of the parties will suffice.

[14] If the honest party already has the adversary's file, the exchange will be trivially fair due to the completeness property. If the adversary already has the honest party's file, then there is no hope for fairness since the adversary can just abort the protocol but he already has the file. Similar arguments hold for exchanging the same file multiple times.

paper discusses generalizations to our protocols [35]. Before the protocol begins, we assume Alice has withdrawn an e-coin from the Bank. Every time Alice and Bob wants to exchange two files (every time before step 2 of the protocol below), Alice generates her fresh key K_A and Bob generates his fresh key K_B for a symmetric encryption scheme. Alice and Bob both have their files (f_A, f_B), have the encrypted versions of their files $(c_A = Enc_{K_A}(f_A), c_B = Enc_{K_B}(f_B))$, have the hashes of their files and encryptions (Alice has $h_{f_A} = hash(f_A), h_{c_A} = hash(c_A)$, and Bob has $h_{f_B} = hash(f_B), h_{c_B} = hash(c_B)$). Besides, the Tracker provides them with the respective verification algorithms: Alice gets h_{f_B}, Bob gets h_{f_A}.[15] Everyone uses the same time zone (e.g., GMT), and the *timeout* is a globally known parameter[16]. If anything goes wrong prior to step 5 (no resolution protocol is applicable), the protocol will be aborted. The protocol proceeds as follows (summarized in Figure 1):

1. Alice creates a fresh public-secret key pair pk_A, sk_A for a signature scheme. Alice sends a fresh unendorsed e-coin $coin'$ to Bob, along with a verifiable escrow $v = VE_{Arb}(end; pk_A)$ of the endorsement *end*, labeled with the signature scheme's public key.
2. Alice sends Bob ciphertext c_A of her file.[17] Bob calculates $h_{c_A} = hash(c_A)$.[18]
3. Bob sends Alice ciphertext c_B of his file. Alice calculates $h_{c_B} = hash(c_B)$.
4. Alice sends Bob an escrow $e = E_{Arb}(K_A; h_{f_A}, h_{f_B}, h_{c_A}, h_{c_B}, time)$ and her signature $s = sign_{sk_A}(e)$ on that escrow. The escrow e should encrypt a key and should be labeled with four hash values $h_{f_A}, h_{f_B}, h_{c_A}, h_{c_B}$, and a *time* value. If any of the hash values do not match Bob's knowledge of those values, or if the *time* value is deviated too much from Bob's knowledge of the time (e.g., almost one timeout difference), then Bob aborts.[19] Moreover, if the signature s on the escrow e does not verify with the public key pk_A sent in step 1 as part of the verifiable escrow v, Bob aborts the protocol.
5. Bob sends Alice his key K_B. Alice checks if the key K_B decrypts the ciphertext c_B correctly. If not, Alice does not proceed with the next step, and runs *AliceResolve*, although she might have to run it again just after the timeout to be able to resolve.
6. Alice sends Bob her key K_A. Bob checks if the key K_A decrypts the ciphertext c_A correctly. If not, he runs *BobResolve*; he must do so before the timeout.[20]

[15] We are abusing the notation by using hash values as verification algorithms provided by the Tracker hoping that the actual verification procedure of hashing the files and comparing the result with values given by the Tracker is obvious.

[16] It can easily be a per-exchange parameter known to (or agreed by) both parties.

[17] Alice and Bob can use their choice of (symmetric) encryption schemes (not necessarily the same). This only requires us to add the definition of the encryption scheme used to the messages exchanged.

[18] These will be Merkle hashes [38] for efficiency reasons.

[19] We do not require tight synchronization. So, for example, the *time* value can just contain hours, and not minutes and seconds.

[20] Bob can run BobResolve immediately after a *message timeout*. He need not wait for a long time for Alice.

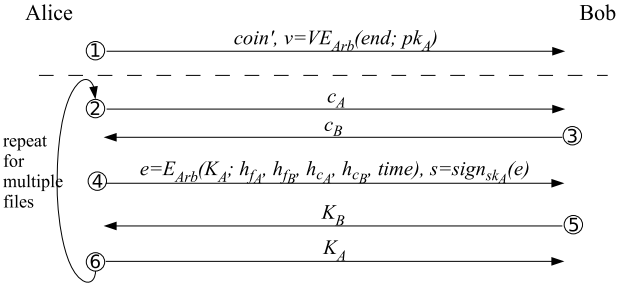

Fig. 1. Our Barter Protocol with Timeouts

Once step 1 is completed, cheap steps 2-6 can be repeated to exchange more files, as long as no dispute occurs. Alice and Bob need not know beforehand how many or which files/blocks to exchange. Whenever they decide to exchange blocks (before every step 2), it is enough for them to just obtain their hashes from the Tracker. Actually, in BitTorrent, once you ask for hash of a file, the Tracker provides you with the hashes of all the blocks in that file already. Thus, connecting the Tracker for each block is not necessary in real life.

Below we present the resolution protocols in case of a dispute between Alice and Bob. The Arbiter never gets involved in a transaction unless there is a dispute.

BobResolve. Bob needs to contact the Arbiter before the timeout for resolution (current time $<$ *time* in escrow e + *timeout*), since otherwise the Arbiter is not going to honor his request. Assuming Bob resolves before the timeout, he provides the Arbiter with the escrow e and signature s that he received in step 4, and also the verifiable escrow v he received in step 1 from Alice. The escrow e should be labeled with four hash values $h_{f_A}, h_{f_B}, h_{c_A}, h_{c_B}$, and a *time* value. The verifiable escrow v should be labeled with a public key pk_A for a signature scheme. If the labels of the escrows are ill-formed, the Arbiter will not honor the request. The Arbiter checks the signature s using the public key in the verifiable escrow v, and if it verifies, he asks Bob to present his correct key K_B that verifies using the VerifyKey protocol in [8] (i.e., it decrypts a ciphertext with hash h_{c_B} to a plaintext with hash h_{f_B}). If Bob succeeds in giving the correct key, the Arbiter stores the key K_B, decrypts the escrow e and hands in the key K_A from the escrow to Bob. Bob checks if K_A decrypts Alice's file f_A correctly. If not, he proves this to the Arbiter using the technique in [8] and gets the endorsement *end* in the verifiable escrow v from the Arbiter.[21] Notice that only Bob may succeed in the BobResolve protocol with the Arbiter because any other party will fail to provide the correct key matching hashes of Bob's files). The subprotocols from [8] can be found in the full version of our paper [35].

AliceResolve. When Alice contacts the Arbiter for resolution, she asks for Bob's key K_B. If such a key exists, then the Arbiter sends K_B to her.[22] K_B has already been verified,

[21] The Arbiter can abort this trade forgetting the K_B in such a case. This is not necessary according to our definition (and can even be considered unfair), but it can be used as a way to punish cheating Alice even more. In the worst case, if non-atomicity of the Arbiter is allowed for efficiency reasons, Alice can obtain K_B before Bob proves K_A to be incorrect, effectively turning our protocol into a buy protocol.

[22] If the Arbiter is allowed to be non-atomical for efficiency reasons, then he needs to ask Alice for her key K_A, verifying it using the VerifyKey protocol in [8] before giving her K_B. This represents a tradeoff between the atomicity and efficiency of the Arbiter, which can be resolved arbitrarily, although it can also be used as a tougher punishment for cheaters.

so Alice does not need to perform any further action. If such a key does not exist yet, Alice should come back after the timeout. If, even after the timeout K_B does not exist, then Alice is assured that it will never exist, and can consider that particular trade as aborted.

3.2 Efficiency Analysis

The efficiency of Alice's and Bob's parts in the protocol can be further improved, as we show in the full version of our paper [35], although this would require the Arbiter to perform more work. Since such trusted third parties can become the bottlenecks of the system, we prefer having the least amount of work to be done by the Arbiter, and let users perform slightly more work instead.

We consider a concrete instantiation of our protocol using endorsed e-cash [18], Camenisch-Shoup verifiable escrow [19], AES encryption [25], DSS signatures [42], and RSA-OAEP public key encryption for (non-verifiable) escrow [10]. Our protocol has only neglectable overhead over just doing an unfair exchange. Sending the ciphertexts in steps 2 and 3 just corresponds to sending the files in any (even unfair) exchange.[23] The keys sent in steps 5 and 6 are extremely short messages (16 bytes each for 128-bit AES keys). For a fair exchange, step 4 is still very cheap since the only primitives used are an ordinary (non-verifiable) escrow (just a public key encryption), and a signature (A DSS signature created using a 1024-bit key is about 40 bytes, while an RSA-OAEP encryption with a 1024-bit key is about 128 bytes).

Assuming IO and CPU can be overlapped, encryption of files will not add any time. Furthermore, signatures and escrows take only a few milliseconds. The most time consuming step is sending the blocks themselves, which has to be done in any case (and encryption does not increase size). The only real overhead is the first step, where the verifiable escrow (and endorsed e-cash, if used) is costly (see below).

Our protocol, in addition to guaranteeing fair barter efficiently, is optimized for multi-barter situations. One such situation is a file sharing scenario as in BitTorrent [22,8]. The peers Alice and Bob are expected to have a long-term barter relationship. Hence, **step 1 needs to be carried out only once per peer, and remaining cheap steps 2-6 would be repeated for each block, whereas previous protocols required a costly step like step 1 to be performed for each block**. This greatly amortizes the costly step 1 in our protocol, when multiple blocks (or files) are exchanged, **even when the files/blocks to be exchanged are not pre-defined** (they need to be defined only before each execution of step 2).

To give some numbers, consider an average BitTorrent file of size $2.8GB$ made up of about $2,500$ blocks [32]. Using previous optimistic fair exchange protocols, this requires $2,500$ costly steps (one per block). Our C++ implementation using endorsed e-cash [18] and Camenisch-Shoup verifiable escrow [19] takes about 2 seconds of computation for step 1 (most of which is the verifiable escrow) on an average computer ($2GHz$). This corresponds to $2500 \times 2seconds =$ **84 minutes** of computation overhead. Considering a BitTorrent client that connects to about 40 peers, using our protocol,

[23] We can in general assume that the I/O and CPU can be pipelined so that the encryption will not add more time to uploading the files.

this overhead becomes just **80 seconds**. Our network overhead is similarly neglectable (around $40KB$ per peer, almost all of which is the one-time cost of step 1, about half of it being endorsed e-cash). This corresponds to about $2500 \times 40KB = \mathbf{100\ MB}$ total overhead using previous schemes, and only **1.6 MB** total overhead using our scheme (for a $2.8GB$ file).

As for the Arbiter, he checks a signature, sometimes decrypts a (verifiable) escrow, and performs the VerifyKey protocol of Belenkiy et al. [8]. The signature check and ordinary escrow decryption takes only milliseconds, the verifiable escrow decryption, when necessary, can take a few hundred milliseconds. The bottleneck is the data that the Arbiter needs to download for the VerifyKey protocol, which is about $22chunks \times 16KB = 352KB$ [8]. An important point to note is that *the amount of data the Arbiter's needs to download is independent of the size of the file that is being exchanged*.[24]

Without considering distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks, let us provide some numbers for evaluation. To have an idea, consider a p2p system of $1,700,000$ users, exchanging $2.8GB$ files on the average [32]. Exchanging two such files means exchanging $5.6GB$ of data. If 1% of all users are malicious, this can correspond to $17,000$ exchanges requiring an arbiter at a given time (where one user is honest and the other is malicious. If both of them are malicious, this number reduces to half of it). We said, in case of a dispute, a peer should upload $352KB$ of data to the Arbiter. Assume that the same upload speed is used when trading files and contacting the Arbiter. If we assume the worst case scenario where the Arbiter can handle only one user at a time and every user is active at all times, this requires having 2 arbiters; with 10% malicious user ratio, we need 11 arbiters. Under the very realistic assumption that an arbiter can handle 25 users at a time (e.g., assuming 25 times as fast download speed of the Arbiter as the upload speed of the users [23]), we will need 1 arbiter in this system (even with 10% malicious user ratio). When we use our protocol without timeouts, these numbers will double (but if our arbiter can handle 25 users at a time, we still need only 1 arbiter). Some more efficiency evaluation, limitations and possible solutions, a generalized version of our protocols, security proofs and privacy discussion can be found in the full version of this paper [35]. The full version also includes the version of our protocol that does not require timeouts.

4 Conclusion

There already are many scenarios where peers trade content [22,32]. These systems unfortunately rely on the honesty of the peers for providing fairness, partly because of the high cost incurred by the previous fair exchange protocols [2,3,4,5,8,18,40]. Our protocols uniquely limit the use of the costly primitives (verifiable escrow and e-cash) to once (or twice) per peer, as opposed to per file/block. We have shown in Section 3.2 that there are one or two orders of magnitude efficiency gains over previous protocols. Besides, most of the existing systems already rely on similar trusted parties [2,3,4,5,8,17,18,20,22,32,40,43]. Therefore, for the first time, by using our protocols, such bartering systems will experience almost no performance loss, while the benefit

[24] Merkle proofs are logarithmic in number of the blocks in the file, but are much smaller in size than the data blocks themselves in practice.

of providing fairness guarantees will be very noticeable indeed (e.g., see [8] for how the use of fair exchange can solve the free-riding problem of BitTorrent). Already, the Brownie Project [14] is adopting our protocols in their BitTorrent deployment.

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