# Formally Secure Compilation of Unsafe Low-level Components

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https://secure-compilation.github.io

### **Collaborators**



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Marco Patrignani

## **Devastating low-level vulnerabilities**



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Inherently insecure C/C++-like languages

- memory (and type) unsafe: any buffer overflow is catastrophic
- root cause, but challenging to fix:
  - efficiency
  - precision
  - scalability
  - backwards compatibility
  - deployment



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break up security-critical C applications into
 mutually distrustful components running with
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**Goal 1: Formalize this** 

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  - interacting only via strictly enforced interfaces





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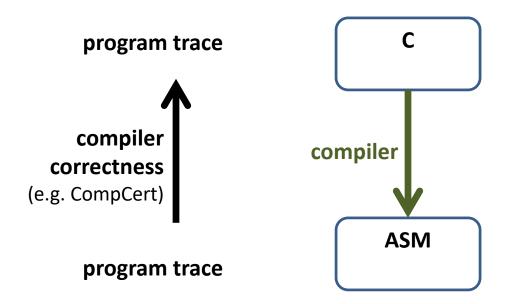


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- Enforce "component C" abstractions:
  - component separation, call-return discipline, ...
- Secure compilation chain:
  - compiler, linker, loader, runtime, system, hardware
- Use efficient enforcement mechanisms:
  - OS processes (all web browsers)
  - software fault isolation (SFI)
  - hardware enclaves (SGX)

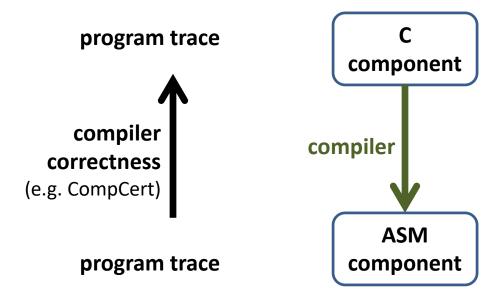
- WebAssembly (web browsers)
- capability machines
- tagged architectures
- Practical need for this (e.g. crypto library/protocol)



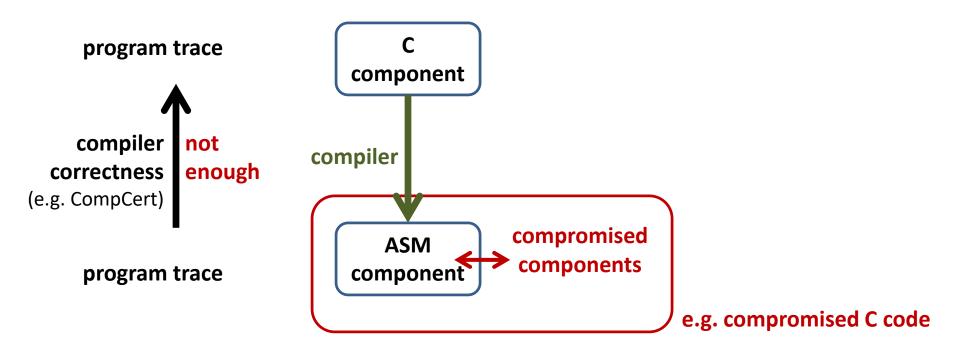




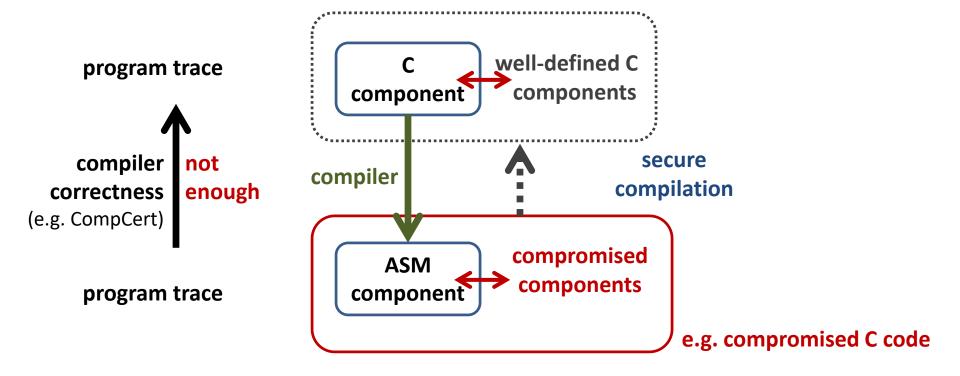




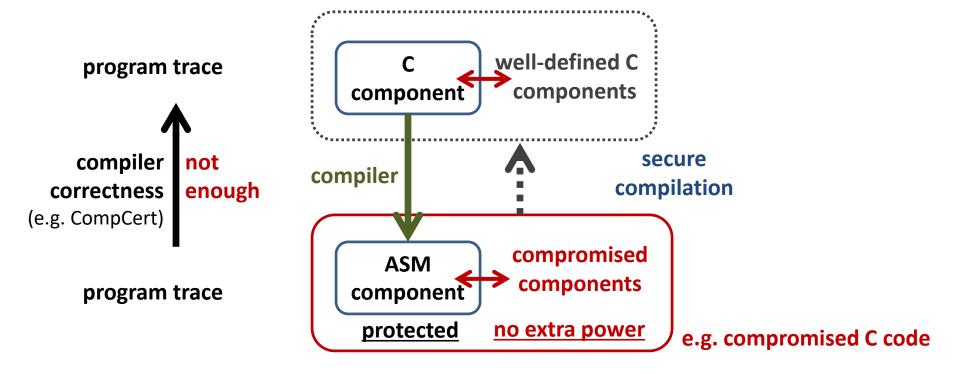




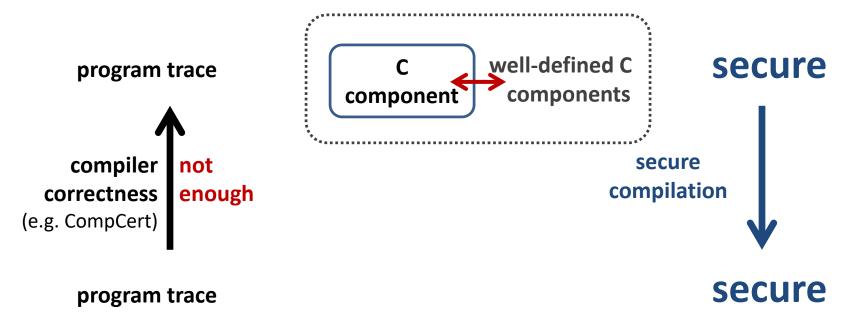






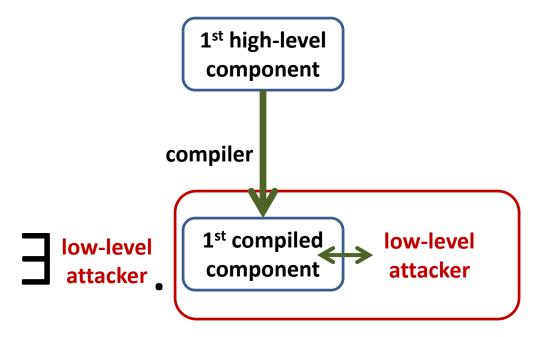


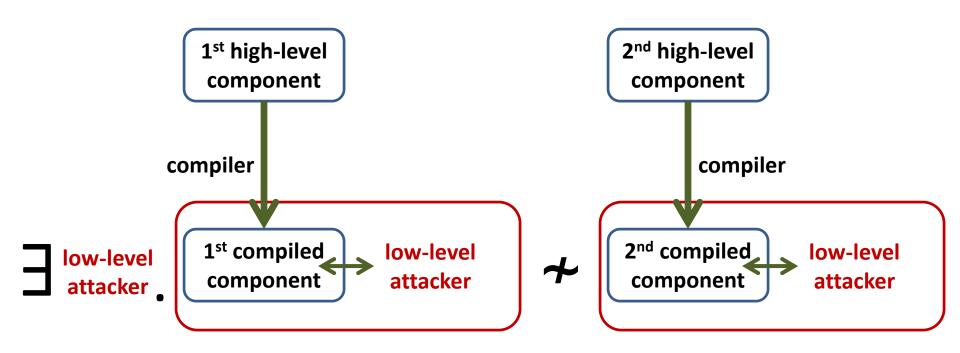


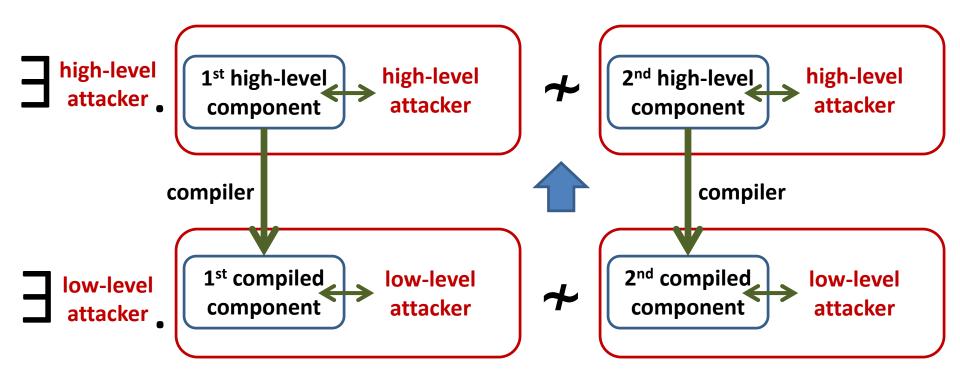


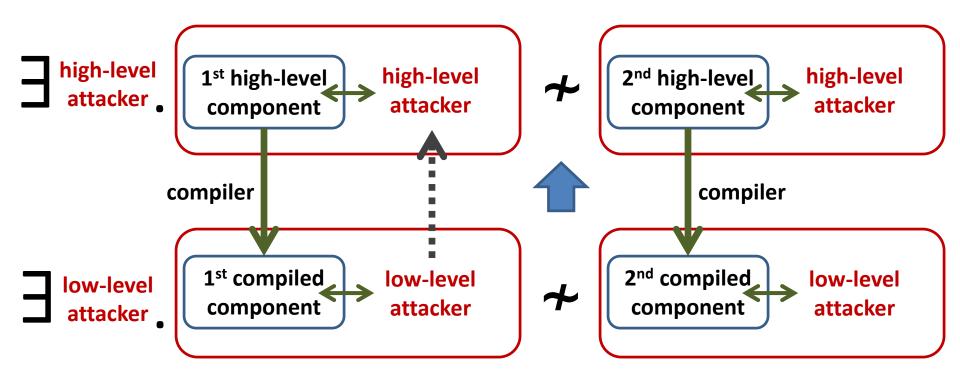


Benefit: sound security reasoning in the source language









```
#include <string.h>
int main (int argc, char **argv) {
   char c[12];
   strcpy(c, argv[1]);
   return 0;
}
```

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Buffer over
```

**Buffer overflow** 

```
$ gcc target.c -fno-stack-protector
$ ./a.out haha
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                            Calcul...
                           View Edit Help
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                                      0
   return 0;
                           MC
                              MR
                                MS
                                        erflow
         $ gcc target.c
                                        protector
         $ ./a.out haha
         $ ./a.out hahak
                                        haha
         zsh: segmentation fault (core dumped)
         $ ./exploit.sh | a.out
```

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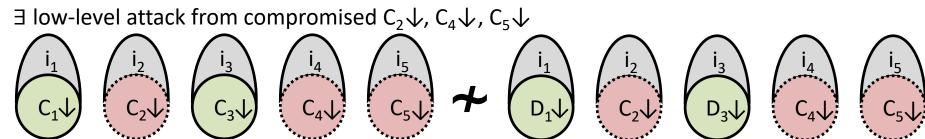
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  - int buf[5]; buf[42] ~? int buf[5]; buf[43]

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- Undefined behavior
  - = can't be expressed at all by source language semantics!
- Problem: observational equivalence doesn't work with undefined behavior!?
  - int buf[5]; buf[42] ~? int buf[5]; buf[43]
- Can we somehow avoid undefined behavior?

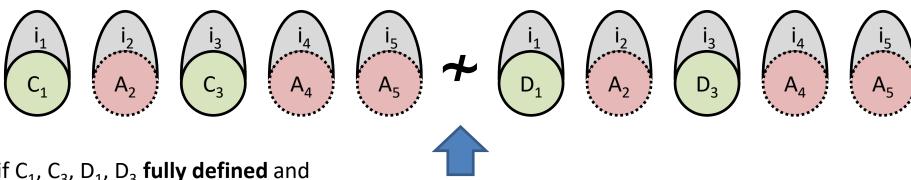
∀compromise scenarios.

if C<sub>1</sub>, C<sub>3</sub>, D<sub>1</sub>, D<sub>3</sub> fully defined and



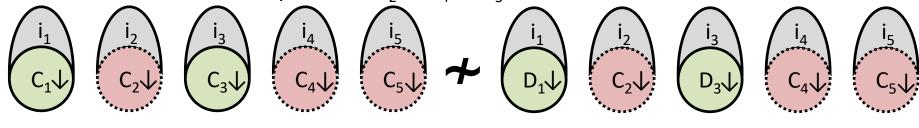
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 $\exists$  high-level attack from some **fully defined**  $A_2$ ,  $A_4$ ,  $A_5$ 



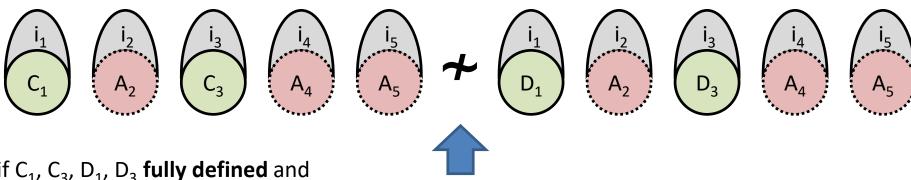
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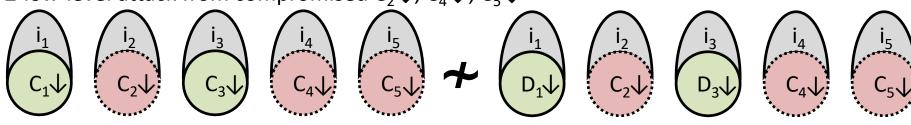
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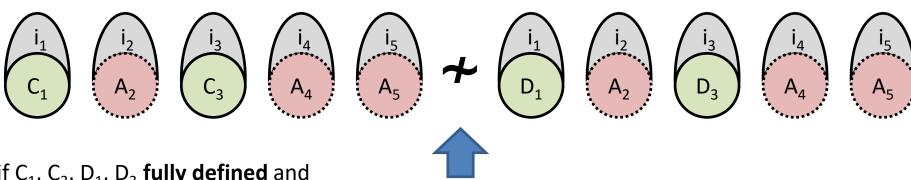


Limitation: static compromise model: C<sub>1</sub>, C<sub>3</sub>, D<sub>1</sub>, D<sub>3</sub> get guarantees only if perfectly safe (i.e. fully defined = do not exhibit undefined behavior in **any** context)

[Beyond Good and Evil - Juglaret, Hriţcu, Azevedo de Amorim, Eng, Pierce, CSF'16]

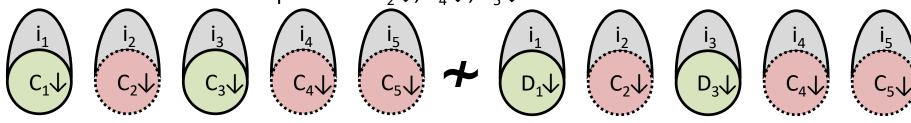
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This is the most we were able to achieve on top of full abstraction!

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```
component C_0 {
  export valid;
  valid(data) { ... }
component C<sub>1</sub> {
  import E.read, C2.init, C2.process;
  main() {
    C_2.init();
    x := E.read();
    y := C_1.parse(x); //(V_1) can UNDEF if x is malformed
    C_2.process(x,y);
  parse(x) { ... }
component C_2 {
  import E.write, Co.valid;
  export init, process;
  init() { ... }
  process(x,y) \{ ... \} //(V_2) \ can \ UNDEF \ if \ not \ initialized
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neither C<sub>1</sub> not C<sub>2</sub> are fully defined

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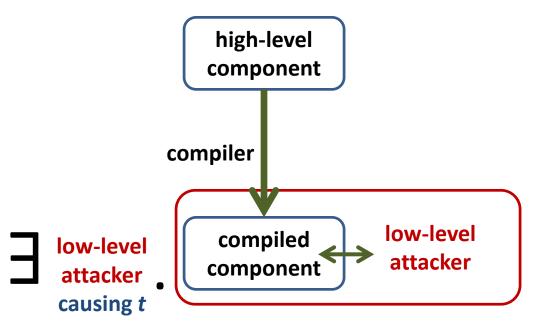
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                                  yet C₁ is protected until calling C₁.parse
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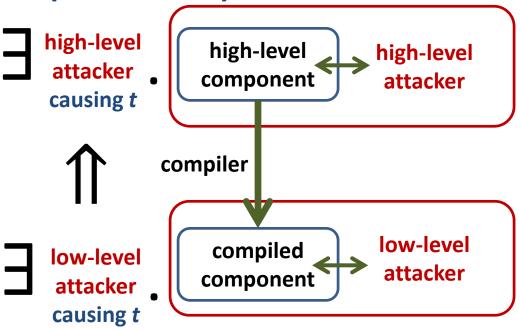
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```
component C_0 {
                                    yet C₁ is protected until calling C₁.parse
  export valid;
  valid(data) { ... }
                                    and C<sub>2</sub> can't actually be compromised
component C_1 {
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  main() {
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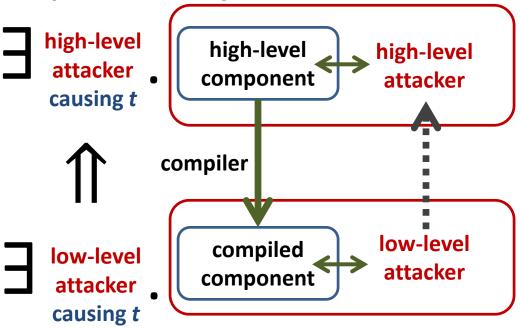
#### $\forall$ (bad attack) trace t



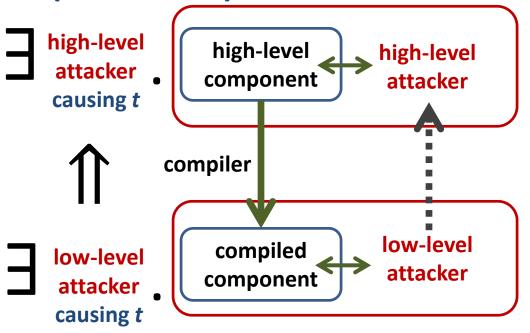
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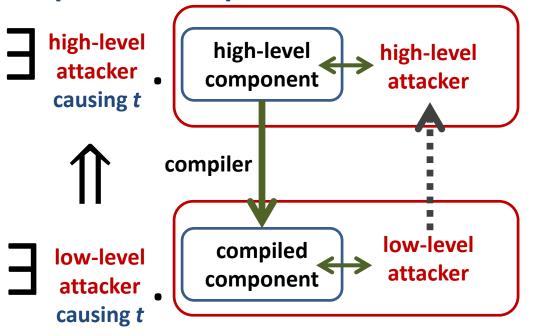


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robust trace property preservation
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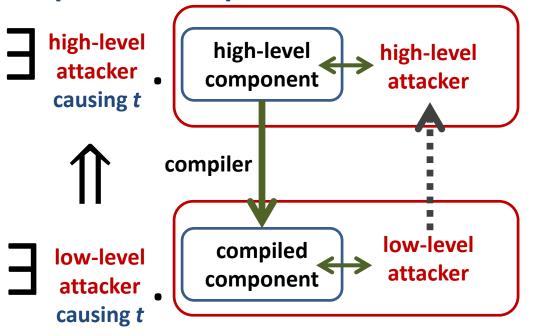


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#### intuition:

- stronger than compiler correctness
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- (when restricted to safety)seems weaker than full abstraction+ compiler correctness

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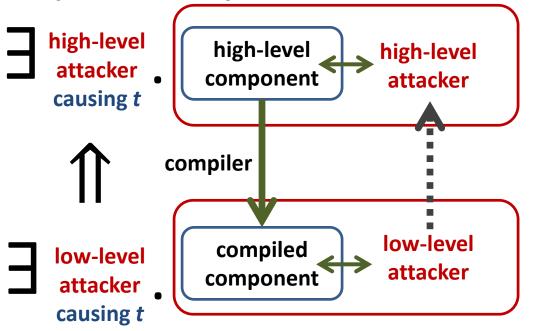
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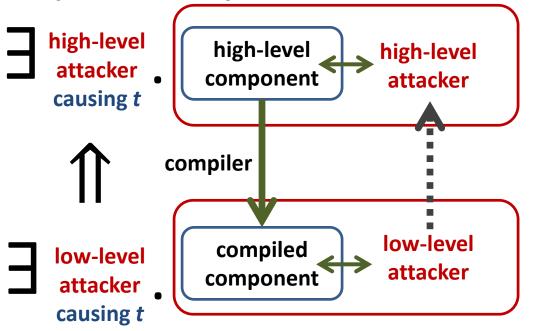
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Advantages: easier to realistically achieve and prove at scale useful: preservation of invariants and other integrity properties more intuitive to security people (generalizes to hyperproperties!)

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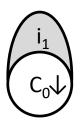
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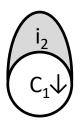
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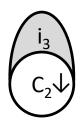
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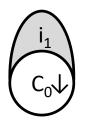
Advantages: easier to realistically achieve and prove at scale useful: preservation of invariants and other integrity properties more intuitive to security people (generalizes to hyperproperties!) extends to unsafe languages, supporting dynamic compromise

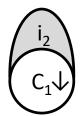


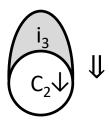




 $\Downarrow t$ 

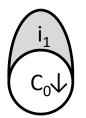


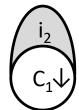


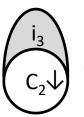




 $\exists$  a **dynamic compromise scenario** explaining t in source language





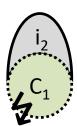


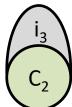
**∜** t



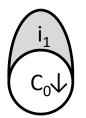
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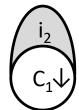
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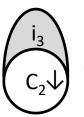




 $\Downarrow$  m<sub>1</sub>;Undef(C<sub>1</sub>)





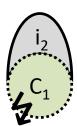


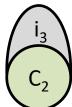
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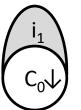
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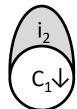
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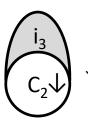




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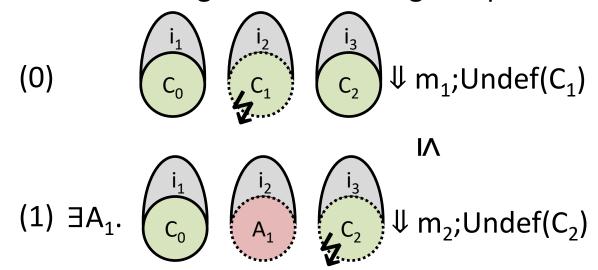


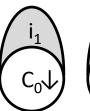


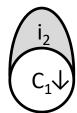


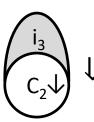


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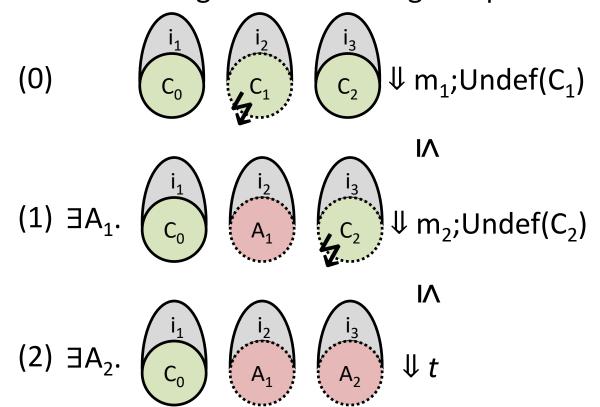


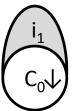


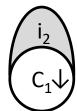


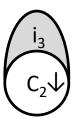


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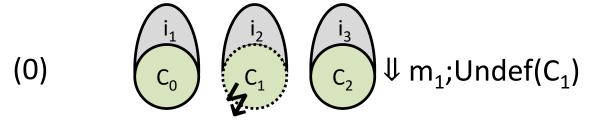




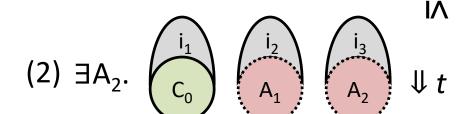




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(1) 
$$\exists A_1$$
.  $C_0$   $A_1$   $C_2$   $\downarrow$   $M_2$ ;  $Undef(C_2)$ 



#### Trace is very helpful

- detect undefined behavior
- rewind execution

[When Good Components Go Bad - Fachini, Stronati, Hriţcu, et al]

- Mutually-distrustful components
  - restrict spatial scope of undefined behavior

- Mutually-distrustful components
  - restrict spatial scope of undefined behavior
- Dynamic compromise
  - restrict temporal scope of undefined behavior

### Mutually-distrustful components

restrict spatial scope of undefined behavior

- restrict temporal scope of undefined behavior
- undefined behavior = observable trace event
- effects of undefined behavior
   shouldn't percolate before earlier observable events
  - careful with code motion, backwards static analysis, ...

### Mutually-distrustful components

restrict spatial scope of undefined behavior

- restrict temporal scope of undefined behavior
- undefined behavior = observable trace event
- effects of undefined behavior
   shouldn't percolate before earlier observable events
  - careful with code motion, backwards static analysis, ...
- CompCert already offers this saner model

### Mutually-distrustful components

restrict spatial scope of undefined behavior

- restrict temporal scope of undefined behavior
- undefined behavior = observable trace event
- effects of undefined behavior
   shouldn't percolate before earlier observable events
  - careful with code motion, backwards static analysis, ...
- CompCert already offers this saner model
- GCC and LLVM currently violate this model

(at least in the setting of compartmentalization for unsafe low-level languages)

Mutual distrust (c<sub>1</sub>) (A<sub>2</sub>)











(at least in the setting of compartmentalization for unsafe low-level languages)

Mutual distrust  $C_1$   $A_2$   $C_3$   $A_4$   $A_5$ 

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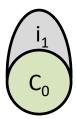
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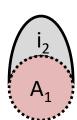


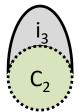




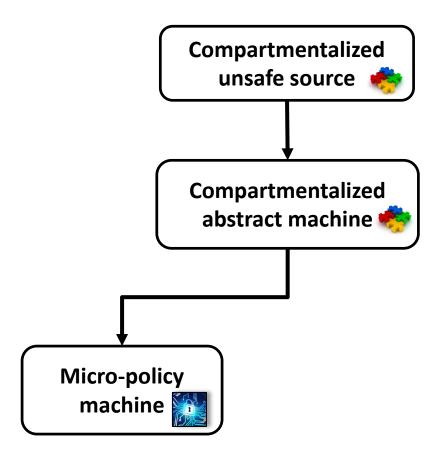
Static privilege  $\begin{pmatrix} c_0 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} c_1 \\ A_1 \end{pmatrix}$ 



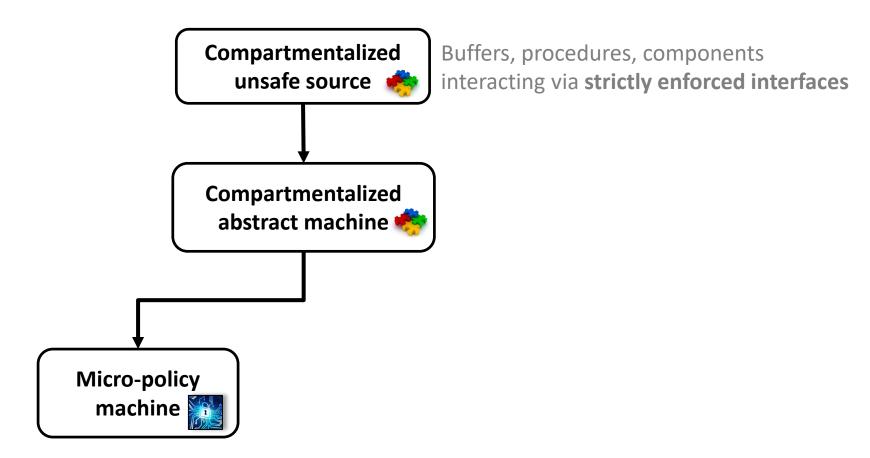


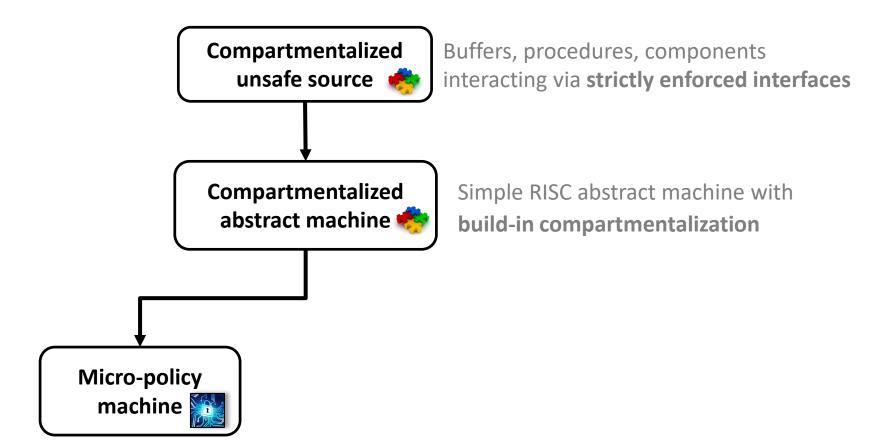


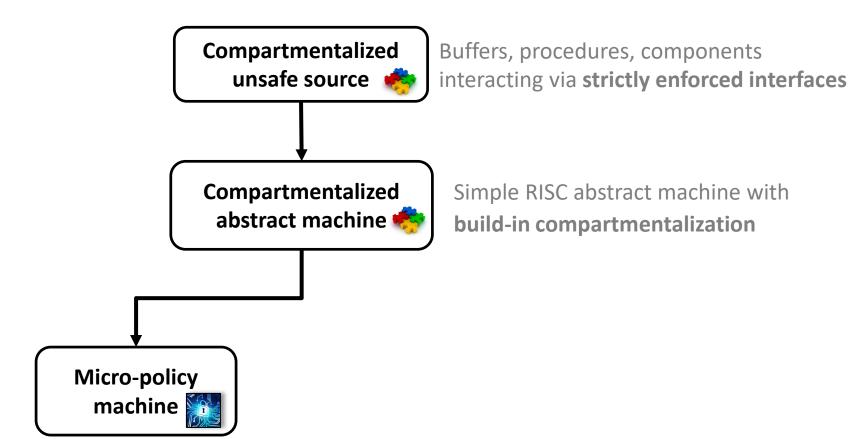
## **Towards Secure Compilation Chain**



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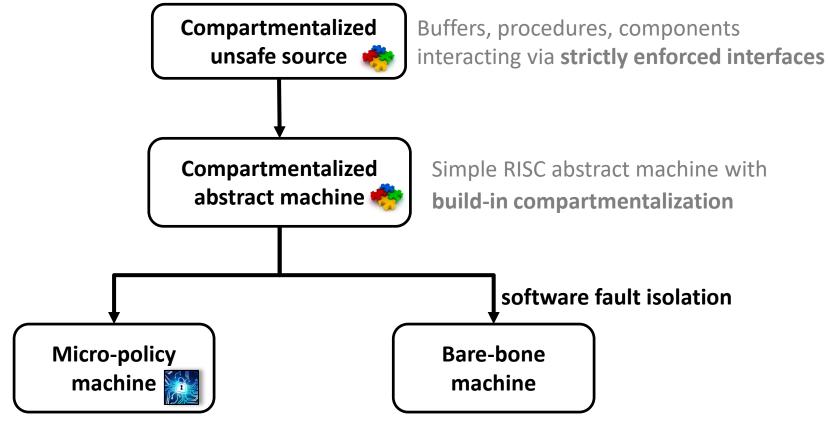






#### **Tag-based reference monitor enforcing:**

- component separation
- procedure call and return discipline
   (linear capabilities / linear entry points)

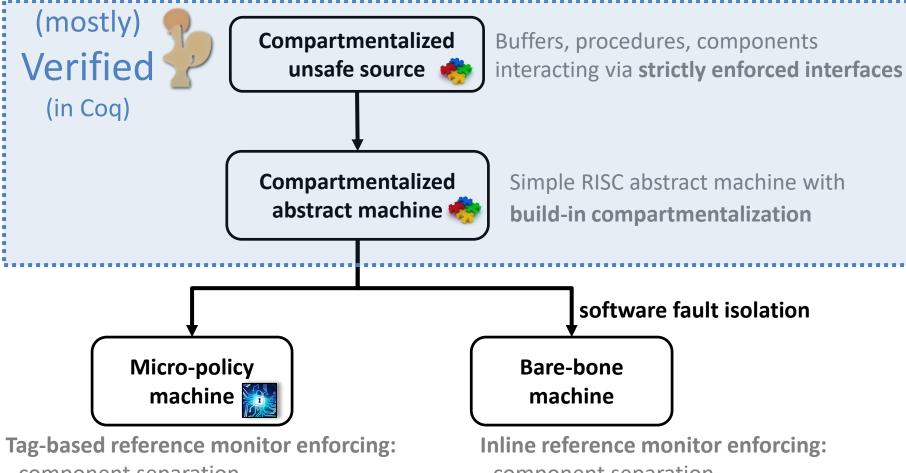


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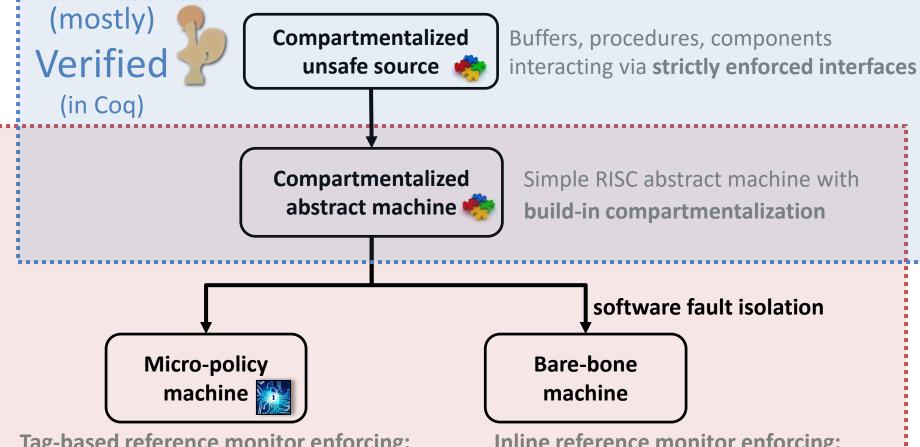
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Systematically tested (with QuickChick) quick



- Scale up secure compilation to more of C
  - first step: allow pointer passing (capabilities)

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## **Grand Challenge**

Build the first efficient formally secure compilers for realistic programming languages

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- 1. Provide secure semantics for low-level languages
  - C with protected components and memory safety
- 2. Enforce secure interoperability with unsafe code
  - ASM, C, and Low\*

[= safe C subset embedded in F\* for verification]

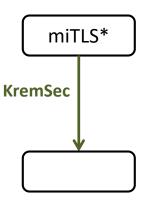
Low\* language (safe C subset in F\*)

miTLS\*

- + components
- + memory safety

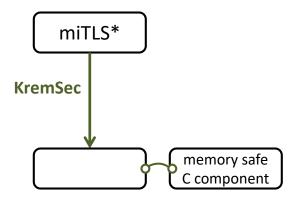
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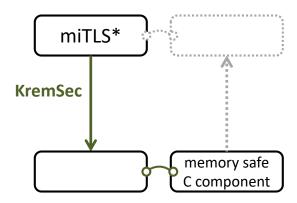
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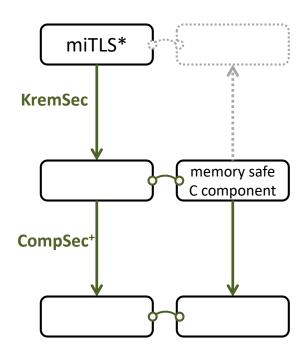
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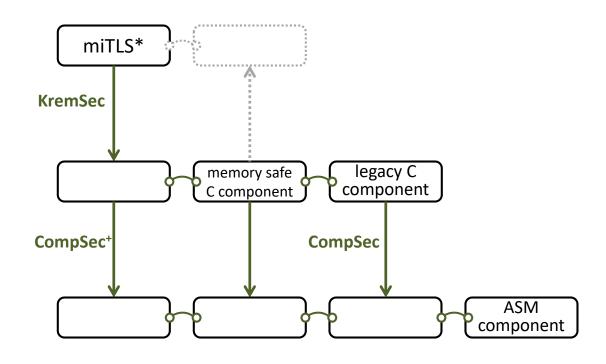
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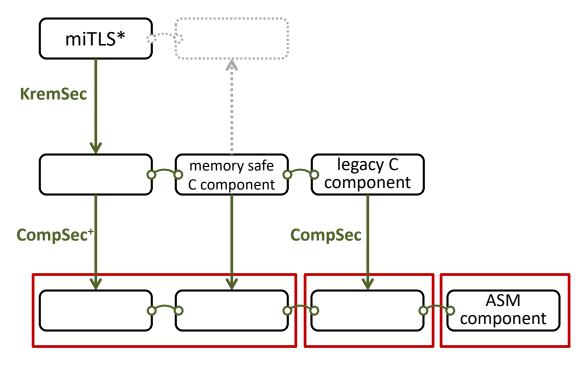
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protecting component boundaries

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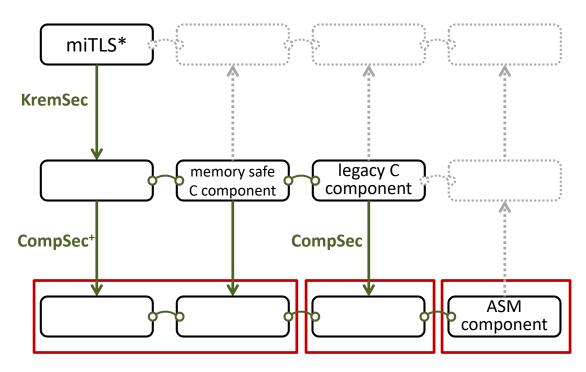
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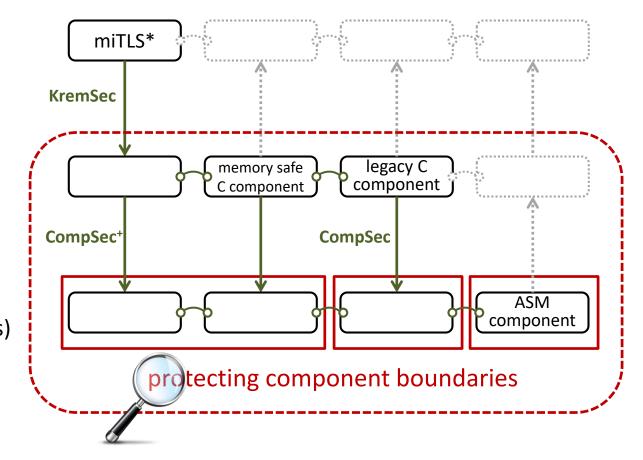
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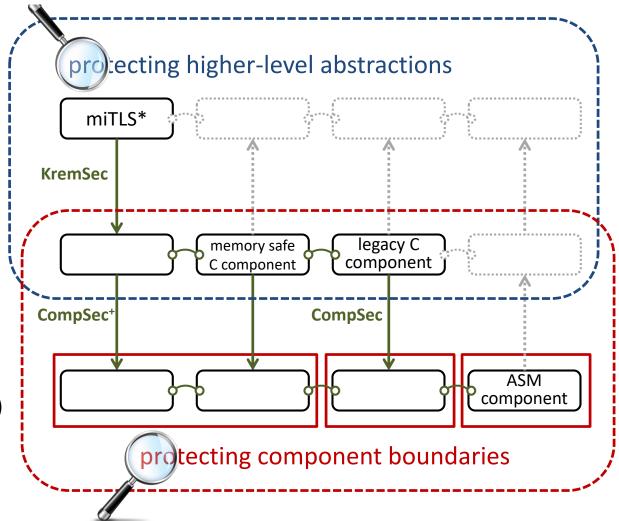
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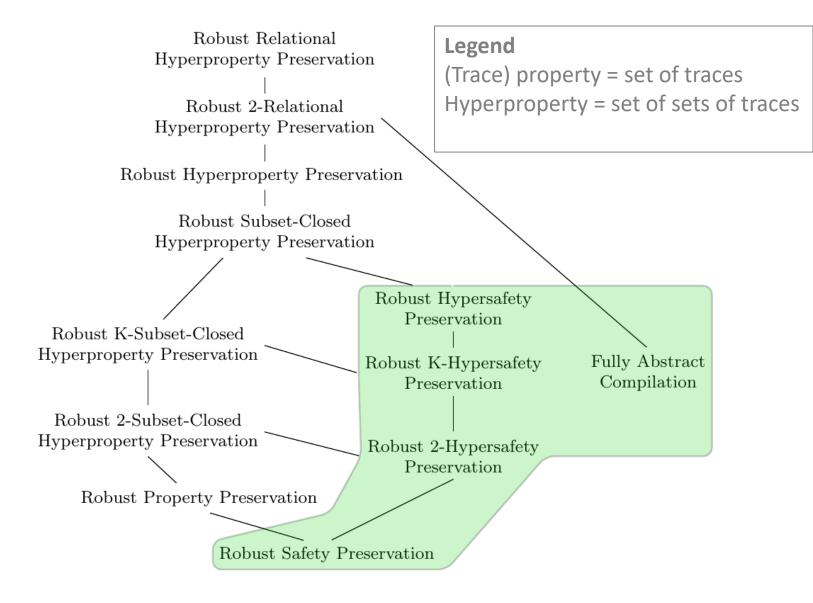
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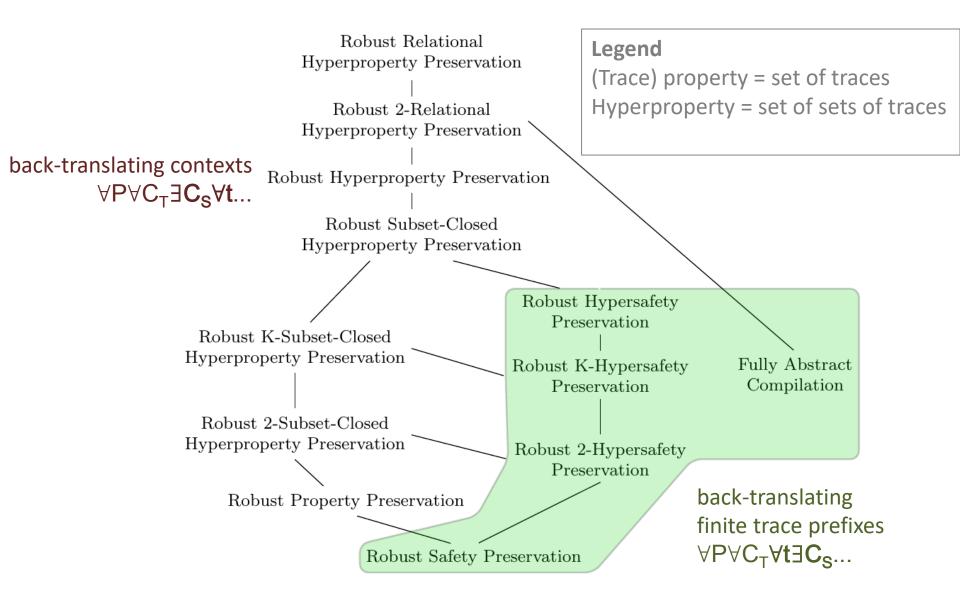




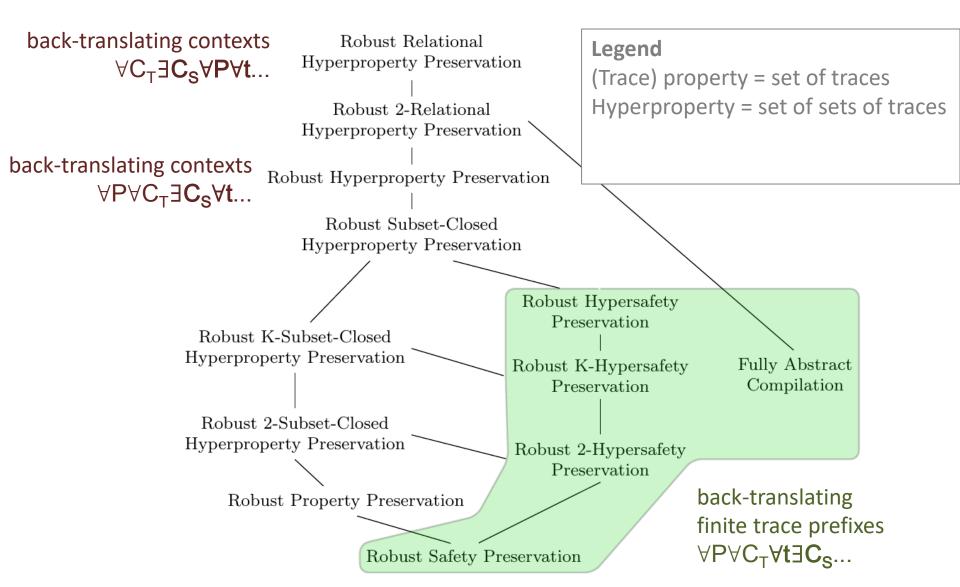
#### Legend

(Trace) property = set of traces Hyperproperty = set of sets of traces





[Robust Hyperproperty Preservation for Secure Compilation - Garg, Hriţcu, et al]



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- growing team at Inria Paris: Rob Blanco (PostDoc),
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- Open to new collaborations
- Building a community
  - Principles of Secure Compilation (PriSC) @ POPL
  - Dagstuhl seminar in May

## **BACKUP SLIDES**





for our extension of robustly safe compilation

1. back-translating finite trace prefixes to whole source programs



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   all this yields much simpler and more scalable proofs