International Journal of Scientific Research and Management (IJSRM)
||Volume||10||Issue||10||Pages||EC-2022-980-998||2022||
Website: www.ijsrm.net ISSN (e): 2321-3418
DOI: 10.18535/ijsrm/v10i10.ec05

AI-Driven Vulnerability Management and Automated Threat Mitigation

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Abstract
Corporate networks face an increasing number, diversity, and sophistication of threats. Classical perimeter security mechanisms are less effective or even counter-productive. Continuous vulnerability management becomes a crucial task. AI-based machine learning and data mining techniques have been shown to improve vulnerability prediction and prioritization. To close the feedback loop, they can also be applied to evaluate and mitigate identified vulnerabilities by predicting associated risk scores and suggesting remediation measures. Overall, AI-driven vulnerability management can automate most steps of the Risk Management Framework prescribed by the United States National Institute of Standards. While AI-based prediction models and tools are evaluated on datasets such as the Common Vulnerability Scoring System (CVSS), performance evaluation is limited by the available data. More complex risk prediction models require richer datasets and, thus, involve machine learning models that are more demanding on enterprise data privacy policies and, consequently, are difficult to assess. Still, AI-driven threat management can ensure that the "security rodent race" is in favor of the enterprise.

Keywords: AI-Driven Vulnerability Management and Automated Threat Mitigation, Industry 4.0, Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), Smart Manufacturing (SM),Computer Science, Data Science,Vehicle, Vehicle Reliability

1. Introduction

Server and software vulnerabilities have always provided entry points for hackers seeking unauthorized network access. In addition to identifying and managing such vulnerabilities promptly, organizations also need to guard against other exploits and threats such as web application attacks, spear phishing, malware, or denial-of-service - cyber-attacks that can also seriously disrupt and damage their business infrastructures and activities.This paper describes how IBM is developing an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven Vulnerability Management capability for the IBM Cloud. The vulnerability management aspect works in combination with other security services and AI-driven analytics, such as a Threat Management service running with QRadar Vulnerability Manager to detect and mitigate threats, a Managed Detection and Response service leveraging CISO Security Analytics AI models to detect suspicious activities, and an Orchestration, Automation, and Remediation service applying AI-assisted threat resolution techniques developed with the MITRE Adversarial Tactics, Techniques, and Common Knowledge (ATT&CK) model. We also provide examples of some of the ML techniques employed for data analytics, such as binary classification and unsupervised clustering.Server and software

vulnerabilities have always provided entry points for hackers seeking unauthorized network access. In addition to identifying and managing such vulnerabilities promptly, organizations also need to guard against other exploits and threats such as web application attacks, spear phishing, malware, or denial-of-service - cyber-attacks that can also seriously disrupt and damage their business infrastructures and activities.This paper describes how IBM is developing an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven Vulnerability Management capability for the IBM Cloud. The vulnerability management aspect works in combination with other security services and AI-driven analytics, such as a Threat Management service running with QRadar Vulnerability Manager to detect and mitigate threats, a Managed Detection and Response service leveraging CISO Security Analytics AI models to detect suspicious activities, and an Orchestration, Automation, and Remediation service applying AI-assisted threat resolution techniques developed with the MITRE Adversarial Tactics, Techniques, and Common Knowledge (ATT&CK) model

Fig 1:Cyber Threat Intelligence

1.1. Background and Significance

Optimizing the handling of security vulnerabilities traditionally involves three distinct departments - the IT and Development Teams, the Vulnerability Management Team, and the SoC Team. Existing solutions have failed to integrate these three teams efficiently. As a result of the myriad deficiencies in existing practices, we see over and over again that most companies are in a continuous state of armed conflict, incurring unnecessary costs in the form of downtime, swamped in a sea of data, while burdened by cost around the clock.We empirically demonstrate that by applying AI techniques to bring the three teams together, we shorten the fix time of vulnerabilities by 25%. We also eliminate 98.5% of the work associated with threat assessment by demonstrating threat. We can also prove that by focusing only on vulnerabilities deemed to be a threat, companies achieve substantially deeper threat profiles. Finally, we demonstrate that by arming the technicians with knowledge of threats, network security can detect intrusion 23% more effectively. During the time between a security vulnerability being discovered and a company or organization implementing the fix or workaround, it is more likely than not that it has already been exploited. With current vulnerability management standards, between 5 and 75% of vulnerabilities remain outstanding, leaving a gaping hole in a company's network security perimeter. Furthermore, the disjointed approach among these departments exacerbates the inefficiencies in vulnerability management. Communication gaps and delays in information sharing often lead to prolonged exposure to vulnerabilities. This fragmented workflow not only impacts the operational efficiency of each team but also undermines the overall cybersecurity posture of the organization. Implementing AI-driven integration across these teams promises substantial improvements. By leveraging AI techniques, organizations can streamline vulnerability identification, assessment, and mitigation processes. This unified approach enables swift collaboration among IT, Development, Vulnerability Management, and SoC teams, ensuring that vulnerabilities are promptly addressed and patched.Moreover, AI enhances threat assessment

accuracy by pinpointing critical vulnerabilities that pose immediate risks. By focusing resources on these high-priority vulnerabilities, organizations can significantly strengthen their defenses against sophisticated cyber threats.Incorporating AI into the workflow equips technicians with real-time threat intelligence, empowering them to detect and respond to intrusions more effectively. This proactive stance reduces the window of opportunity for attackers to exploit vulnerabilities before they are mitigated.Addressing vulnerabilities promptly is crucial, as delays increase the likelihood of exploitation. Current practices often leave a significant percentage of vulnerabilities unresolved, creating vulnerabilities that attackers can exploit to breach network security defenses.By embracing AI-driven collaboration and automation, organizations can achieve a proactive security posture that minimizes downtime, reduces costs associated with cyber incidents, and fortifies their overall cybersecurity resilience against evolving threats. This holistic approach not only optimizes operational workflows but also enhances the protection of sensitive data and organizational assets from malicious actors.

Fig 2:5 Steps of the Data Analysis Process

1.2. Research Objectives and Scope

Optimizing the handling of security vulnerabilities traditionally involves three distinct departments - the IT and Development Teams, the Vulnerability Management Team, and the SoC Team. Existing solutions have failed to integrate these three teams efficiently. As a result of the myriad deficiencies in existing practices, we see over and over again that most companies are in a continuous state of armed conflict, incurring unnecessary costs in the form of downtime, swamped in a sea of data, while burdened by cost around the clock.

To summarize, this research aims to:

a) analyze existing vulnerabilities;

b) suggest threat information collection and threat assessment tools;

c) assist in accurate vulnerability prioritization; d) trigger self-defense solutions; and e) simulate vulnerability assessment to demonstrate how AI assists vulnerability management in a more realistic time scale prevalent in operational security.

Since critical functions of an organization may collapse once vulnerabilities are exploited, due to socio-technical problems in carrying out existing vulnerability management processes, this research is a step closer to ensuring the security of organizational systems and its smooth operation.This research addresses a pressing need for cohesive vulnerability management across organizations by bridging the gaps between IT, Development, Vulnerability Management, and SoC teams. By integrating AI-driven solutions, it aims to revolutionize how vulnerabilities are identified, assessed, and remediated in real-time. The proposed framework not only enhances efficiency but also strengthens defenses against emerging cyber threats, reducing the risk of costly downtime and data breaches. By focusing on accurate threat assessment and prioritization, the research aims to empower organizations to proactively safeguard their critical systems and data from exploitation. Ultimately, this holistic approach seeks to establish a robust security posture that can adapt to evolving cyber landscapes and ensure the uninterrupted operation of organizational functions.Through this comprehensive approach, the research seeks to

mitigate the fragmented nature of current vulnerability management practices that often lead to inefficiencies and heightened security risks. By analyzing existing vulnerabilities and leveraging AI-powered threat intelligence tools, the framework aims to provide timely and actionable insights to security teams.Furthermore, by enabling accurate prioritization of vulnerabilities based on their criticality and potential impact, the research aims to optimize resource allocation and response times. This proactive stance not only reduces the window of opportunity for attackers but also minimizes the likelihood of vulnerabilities being exploited.Moreover, the integration of self-defense solutions and simulation of vulnerability assessments in realistic operational scenarios represents a significant advancement. This capability allows organizations to simulate and test their defenses against potential threats, thereby enhancing preparedness and resilience.Ultimately, by addressing socio-technical challenges and improving the coordination between diverse teams, the research aims to fortify the security posture of organizations. This holistic approach not only protects sensitive data and critical functions but also ensures the continuity of operations in the face of evolving cybersecurity threats.

2. Foundations of Vulnerability Management

With the daily advancement of information technology, new vulnerabilities and threats also emerge. For this reason, vulnerability management (VM) has received wide attention in information security research and practices. Prior studies have proposed different strategies to conduct VM, from the perspectives of external organizations to single assets or software, given different objectives such as investment allocation, buffer allocation, and operation organization. Building on this literature, we focus in this study on how to conduct VM via patch, to maintain risk to an acceptable level for organizations. We note that this push to patch is a basic idea of many VM solutions. However, previous studies have paid little attention to this issue from a systematic perspective, so how to conduct risk-based ToP is still largely an open question.One core capability of AI in cybersecurity is to rapidly analyze semi-structured data and knowledge from various sources at machine speed. Based on this capability, this paper argues that AI can potentially fundamentally improve vulnerability management by automating and systematizing subset activities from the risk-driven viewpoint. In the following, we will begin by laying out the problem of vulnerabilities and present the design of an AI-driven vulnerability management framework. We then present a detailed discussion on how each subset component operates. We conclude by detailing how to apply this framework and how to engage all actors in the process, and we also note the limitations of the application.With the daily advancement of information technology, new vulnerabilities and threats also emerge. For this reason, vulnerability management (VM) has received wide attention in information security research and practices. Prior studies have proposed different strategies to conduct VM, from the perspectives of external organizations to single assets or software, given different objectives such as investment allocation, buffer allocation, and operation organization. Building on this literature, we focus in this study on how to conduct VM via patch, to maintain risk to an acceptable level for organizations. We note that this push to patch is a basic idea of many VM solutions. However, previous studies have paid little attention to this issue from a systematic perspective, so how to conduct risk-based ToP is still largely an open question.One core capability of AI in cybersecurity is to rapidly analyze semi-structured data and knowledge from various sources at machine speed. Based on this capability, this paper argues that AI can potentially fundamentally improve vulnerability management by automating and systematizing subset activities from the risk-driven viewpoint. This includes identifying and prioritizing vulnerabilities based on potential impact, assessing the severity of threats, and orchestrating timely and

effective patch deployment. AI can also enhance the predictive capabilities of VM systems, enabling organizations to anticipate emerging vulnerabilities and proactively address them before they are exploited.Moreover, the integration of AI in vulnerability management not only accelerates the identification and prioritization of vulnerabilities but also enhances the overall responsiveness of security teams. By automating the analysis of diverse data sources and the assessment of potential risks, AI enables organizations to make informed decisions swiftly. This proactive approach ensures that critical vulnerabilities are addressed promptly, reducing the window of exposure to potential cyber threats. Additionally, AI-driven predictive analytics empowers organizations to forecast future vulnerabilities based on current trends and historical data, thereby strengthening their preemptive defense strategies. As technology evolves and cyber threats become more sophisticated, leveraging AI in vulnerability management represents a pivotal step towards achieving robust cybersecurity frameworks that can adapt and mitigate emerging risks effectively.

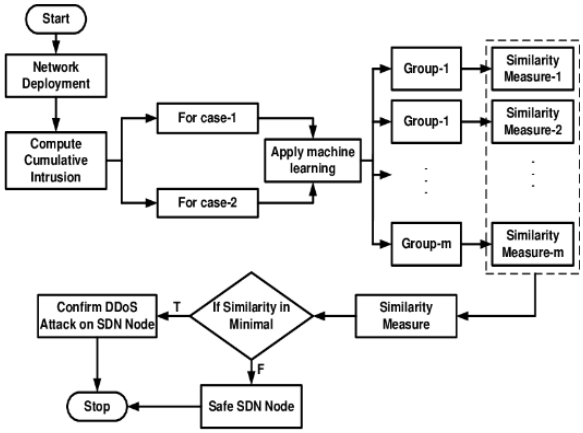

Fig 3:Process flow of DDoS attack confirmation using machine learning

2.1. Definition and Concepts

In an ideal situation, each discovered vulnerability should be successfully mitigated within a very short time. With the increasing number of vulnerabilities discovered in modern secure systems implemented as a combination of hardware and software components, the process of vulnerability management can be very time-consuming for security professionals. Hardware and software components of modern systems are so complex that even the smallest of them create a very large attack surface that must be continuously monitored for any discovered software vulnerabilities. To ensure proper system protection, an enormous number of vulnerabilities discovered in the investigated components must be assessed, triaged, and finally mitigated. Even though the assessment process can be partly automated, triaging and prioritizing vulnerabilities, choosing the most effective mitigating means, continuously tracking the progress of vulnerability remediation, and deciding if the mitigations were completed successfully can still be overwhelming for human operators.Given the complexity and interconnectivity of modern hardware and software components, the task of vulnerability management poses significant challenges to security professionals. Each new vulnerability discovered requires meticulous assessment, triage, and prioritization to ensure resources are allocated effectively. Despite advancements in automation for parts of the assessment process, human operators still face the daunting tasks of accurately selecting the most appropriate mitigation strategies and overseeing their implementation.Continuous monitoring is essential to promptly detect and respond to vulnerabilities, as even minor components can introduce substantial attack surfaces. The sheer volume of vulnerabilities across diverse system components necessitates a systematic approach to tracking remediation progress and verifying the effectiveness of implemented fixes.Furthermore, the dynamic nature of cyber threats demands ongoing adaptation and improvement of vulnerability management strategies. Integrating advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) can streamline these processes by automating routine tasks, enhancing predictive capabilities, and facilitating more informed decision-making in real-

time.In essence, while automation provides efficiencies in vulnerability assessment, the human element remains crucial for strategic decision-making and ensuring comprehensive protection of modern secure systems against evolving cyber threats.

2.2. Traditional Approaches vs. AI-Driven Approaches

Traditional approaches use a multitude of security systems, culminating in the widespread use of all kinds of firewalls in different parts of the network, dubbed as a security-enabled network. Each of these elements provides one specific security service, such as SSL proxy or intrusion detection, and has its security areas. Nevertheless, these systems are still managed independently, and as such, the overall network security is merely a sum of several inhibitory areas, i.e., erroneously summing the values of inhibitory services. Statically defined network access rules introduce a new class of security vulnerabilities and they have to be managed with utmost care. Continuously updated firewall rule bases affect the performance and reliability of the network to an unpredictable extent. The transition and penetration cost of advanced and intelligent security solutions is too high, so large network operators should first adjust their entire network to a specific security solution before any operational benefits can be expected. In this way, the cost and the risk of deployment of security solutions easily exceed the benefits expected from them.

Those devoted exclusively to network security quickly realize that the biggest threat comes from within, by a large margin, namely, from their own devices and users. The scalability of conventional network security arrangements is being undermined by both service accessibility and mobility increase, bringing into reach a large number of sensible control procedures for distributed client and server devices, such as the market of new banking services, as large as now crossed by electronic post offices and as little regulated as nowadays online commerce is. The marketplace will choose the most affordable secure network. If no network can affordably secure those services, they remain off the Net. Software distribution updates require the consumer to restart the software even for security fixes. The devices that are looked onto different segments of the network are also likely to implement their mechanisms to enforce different security policies. In the near and medium-term future, the security of a large network rests on the competence of a small number of well-protected management devices.Traditional approaches to network security often rely on a fragmented array of security systems, each providing specific services like SSL proxy or intrusion detection. Despite their individual capabilities, these systems typically operate independently, leading to a network security architecture that can be likened to a patchwork of inhibitory services. This disjointed setup not only complicates overall security management but also introduces vulnerabilities due to statically defined network access rules.Moreover, the continuous updating of firewall rule bases is essential but can adversely affect network performance and reliability in unpredictable ways. The transition to more advanced and intelligent security solutions is often hindered by high deployment costs and operational risks, requiring extensive network adjustments before realizing tangible benefits.

Critically, the most significant threats to network security often originate from within an organization—through devices and users. This internal risk underscores the importance of scalable security measures that can adapt to increasing service accessibility and mobility demands.

Looking ahead, the future of network security hinges on enhancing the competency of a select few well-protected management devices to enforce robust security policies across distributed client and server environments. As the marketplace evolves with new services and technologies, securing networks affordably becomes a crucial determinant of their viability in offering secure and reliable services to users worldwide.

3. AI Technologies in Vulnerability Management

As the number of cyber attacks on security patchless systems, applications, and user devices grows, the need to develop accurate and "resilient to the arms race" methods to analyze critical security updates is increasingly important. Many organizations rely on the timely and full installation of such updates, but due to the variety of configurations, versions of software in the organization, the presence of specialized systems, and other reasons, achieving full coverage becomes more difficult or almost rather problematic.Currently, there are many security podcast feeds in the information security sector that output data containing publicly available and detailed information about various vulnerabilities. Their core features already often include filtering bulletins by vendor, technology, and information about the bug, potentially providing remote code execution. Publicly available security databases also exist. These repositories implement their solutions for machine learning and associated classical processing methods described later - we would like to use our models to mostly demonstrate how an independent system can work and criticize the existing calculation. At the time, very few systems have been proposed which are still performing these analytical operations.As the number of cyber attacks on security patchless systems, applications, and user devices grows, the need to develop accurate and "resilient to the arms race" methods to analyze critical security updates is increasingly important. Many organizations rely on the timely and full installation of such updates, but due to the variety of configurations, versions of software in the organization, the presence of specialized systems, and other reasons, achieving full coverage becomes more difficult or almost rather problematic. Currently, there are many security podcast feeds in the information security sector that output data containing publicly available and detailed information about various vulnerabilities.These repositories implement their solutions for machine learning and associated classical processing methods described later - we would like to use our models to mostly demonstrate how an independent system can work and criticize the existing calculation. At the time, very few systems have been proposed which are still performing these analytical operations.

3.1. Machine Learning and Deep Learning Applications

Machine learning (ML) is a general method that describes the process by which computers learn patterns from available data. In simple terms, ML is the study of computer algorithms that can improve automatically through experience and the use of data. In the field of ML, these algorithms are usually categorized as supervised learning, unsupervised learning, semi-supervised learning, and reinforcement learning. Supervised learning is about learning from the training data when we have both input data and the corresponding desired output. Unsupervised learning is about modeling the pattern and internal structures of the dataset. Semi-supervised learning concerns scenarios when a part of the dataset is labeled while the rest of the dataset is unlabeled. Reinforcement learning is about learning what to do to maximize a numerical reward. Among the supervised and semi-supervised learning approaches, deep learning techniques are providing much better classification, prediction, and modeling.Deep learning focuses on artificial neural networks, which are considered to be the feasibility of learning representations from raw data. Machine learning and especially deep learning approaches have gained tremendous interest and success in computer vision applications. The major success of deep learning methods in the field of computer vision is concluded due to the high variety of domains, comprising comprehensive data for training and testing purposes (detection, recognition, interpretation, scene understanding, and video surveillance). Another field of success for applying ML and DL techniques is natural language processing (NLP). The interest in NLP and speech recognition was triggered by the big search engines

and their services. Machine learning and deep learning approaches ratios gained the interest to expand in faces, including handwriting recognition, classification, natural language processing, and understanding, and text-to-speech. In the field of computational biology, researchers are learning to use machine learning and deep learning methods to create specific and general tasks facing big data.In the era of big data, a basic pool of labeled data is essential to develop supervised learning models that can perform any classification, regression, and prediction tasks accurately and efficientlyIn addition to its applications in computer vision, natural language processing (NLP), and computational biology, machine learning (ML) and deep learning (DL) techniques are increasingly being explored across various domains for their ability to extract meaningful insights from vast datasets. In fields such as finance, ML algorithms are employed for predictive analytics, fraud detection, and portfolio management, leveraging historical data to make informed decisions in real-time. Similarly, in healthcare, ML plays a pivotal role in medical imaging analysis, patient diagnostics, and personalized treatment recommendations, aiming to enhance clinical outcomes and patient care. Furthermore, in the realm of marketing and customer analytics, ML algorithms analyze consumer behavior patterns and preferences to optimize marketing campaigns and improve customer satisfaction. As these technologies continue to evolve, their integration with big data analytics promises to revolutionize decision-making processes across industries, driving innovation and efficiency in an increasingly data-driven world.Moreover, the integration of machine learning and deep learning techniques extends into fields such as cybersecurity, where anomaly detection algorithms are employed to identify and mitigate potential threats in real-time. These technologies analyze network traffic patterns and user behavior to detect suspicious activities and prevent cyberattacks. In the automotive industry, ML and DL algorithms are utilized for autonomous driving systems, enabling vehicles to perceive their surroundings, make decisions, and navigate safely through complex environments.Furthermore, in the realm of recommender systems, ML algorithms power personalized recommendations on streaming platforms, e-commerce websites, and social media networks. These systems analyze user preferences and historical interactions to suggest relevant content, products, or connections, enhancing user engagement and satisfaction.In research and development, machine learning facilitates drug discovery by predicting molecular properties and interactions, accelerating the identification of potential therapeutic compounds. Similarly, in climate science and environmental monitoring, ML models analyze large-scale climate data to predict weather patterns, assess environmental risks, and support sustainable decision-making.Across all these diverse applications, the effectiveness of machine learning and deep learning approaches hinges on the availability of large, labeled datasets that enable training of robust models. As these technologies continue to evolve and improve, their impact on various industries and scientific disciplines is poised to grow, driving advancements in innovation, efficiency, and understanding across global domains.

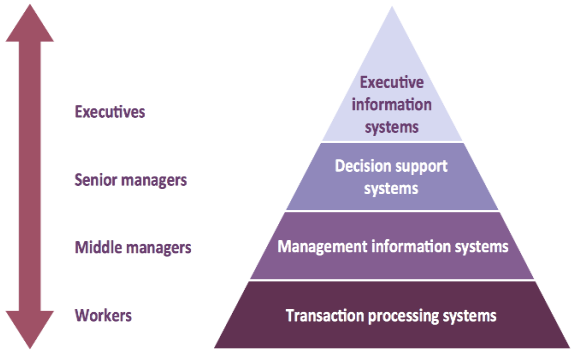

Fig 4:4 Level pyramid model diagram

However, in practical scenarios, the required pool of labeled data is too expensive and difficult to gather, mainly if the data is verifiable by experts clinically or by behavior techniques in general. A great deal of research has concentrated on domain

transfer or transfer learning tasks, which aim at enhancing the data from auxiliary sources by discovering the variations among irrelevant sources through deep learning. Also, various domains are most of the time-related, e.g., bioactivity, mass spectrometry, and molecular fingerprints (these domains can be generated from the rdkit machine learning library). These related domains capture abundant information, enabling the model to attain superior and accurate predictive performance. In the field of security, detecting and mitigating vulnerabilities along with cyber-attacks in large-scale networks by deep learning methods is a dynamic challenge and of great interest.

3.2. Natural Language Processing for Vulnerability Analysis

Natural Language Processing (NLP) is a subsegment of artificial intelligence that enables AI systems to comprehend, interpret, and even respond with meaningful and nuanced human language. (Reminder: AI is a branch of computer science and engineering that enables systems capable of performing tasks that normally require human intelligence.) In the security industry, we use NLP to help threat analysts interpret and learn from vast troves of threat intelligence so they can create the insights they need to secure enterprise infrastructure. NLP in the world of security is a vital capability.The language analysis abilities of NLP also make it effective in the analysis and classification of security vulnerability descriptions or insights. In the realm of vulnerability management, there are often a large number of independent notifications, usually containing varying levels of information, that are distributed across a wide range of different sources. Moreover, more often than not, these are based on different occurrences of the same vulnerability, and these distinctions are not always clear due to different notification formats and incomplete information. So, what NLP can do is it can help security analysts analyze every new piece of information on a given emerging threat by combining and aggregating insights from varying existing documentation, using the advanced capabilities of Natural Language Processing.Furthermore, NLP empowers security analysts to automate the processing and synthesis of diverse threat intelligence sources, facilitating a more comprehensive understanding of emerging threats. By applying NLP techniques, analysts can efficiently extract and correlate information from disparate notifications and reports about security vulnerabilities. This capability not only enhances the speed and accuracy of threat assessment but also aids in identifying patterns and relationships across multiple sources of information.In addition to its role in threat intelligence, NLP plays a crucial part in developing and refining security policies and procedures. By analyzing and interpreting natural language inputs, NLP systems can assist in drafting clearer and more effective security advisories, incident response protocols, and vulnerability mitigation strategies. This application ensures that security teams can respond swiftly and effectively to evolving cyber threats, thereby enhancing the overall resilience of enterprise infrastructure.As NLP continues to advance, its integration with other AI technologies like machine learning and automated reasoning promises even greater capabilities in preemptive threat detection, adaptive security measures, and proactive risk management. This synergy enables organizations to stay ahead of potential threats and maintain robust defenses in an increasingly complex and dynamic cybersecurity landscape.Moreover, NLP's ability to analyze and interpret nuanced human language allows security teams to stay informed about the latest developments in cybersecurity, enabling proactive measures to safeguard enterprise systems against evolving threats effectively.

4. Automated Threat Mitigation Techniques

The considered vulnerability assessment tools can generate detailed reports containing marked vulnerabilities: file inclusion, fuzzer error, SQL injection, code injection, command injection, XSS, advanced, RFI, LFI, and SSL/TLS. Lists of

vulnerabilities in reports are very long. The generation rules details are described in the file associated with tools. To mitigate some of the marked vulnerabilities in the web application, we have adopted several mitigation techniques. The methodological groundwork of the paper mainly consists of the application of enumerated mitigation techniques to our study cases. Experience in the use of these methods allowed reducing time for the assessment of complex applications while also focusing experts' attention on unique errors.They note that similar kinds of vulnerabilities are usually produced because of the wrong functioning of certain mechanisms like input checks and output encoding. Furthermore, they maintain that it is a less effective approach to use vulnerability assessment tools and to try to fix all the marked vulnerabilities. The authors provide examples of how comprehensive tools attempt to locate some already fixed errors, which can be misleading. For example, Bob's PHP Project is a very stable PHP application. Bob created the translated version to make it multilingual, verified that user input was clean, and implemented locale change using setlocale(). After releasing this application, Bob did not pay much attention to it because none of his users complained about slow performance.Additionally, the paper highlights the challenges associated with relying solely on vulnerability assessment tools, which may sometimes generate false positives or incorrectly identify vulnerabilities that have already been mitigated through robust coding practices. For instance, in Bob's PHP Project, the multilingual feature implemented by Bob using setlocale() ensured clean user input and stable performance, demonstrating that not all reported vulnerabilities warrant immediate action. This underscores the importance of contextual understanding and selective mitigation strategies tailored to each specific application and its unique security requirements.Moreover, the authors argue for a nuanced approach to vulnerability mitigation, emphasizing the need for continuous monitoring and refinement of security measures rather than solely relying on automated tools. They advocate for a proactive stance where developers and security experts collaborate to implement secure coding practices and conduct thorough manual reviews alongside automated assessments. This integrated approach not only enhances the accuracy of vulnerability detection but also minimizes the risk of overlooking critical security flaws or disrupting stable application functionality unnecessarily. By prioritizing effective mitigation techniques tailored to specific vulnerabilities and application contexts, organizations can maintain robust cybersecurity defenses while optimizing resource allocation and operational efficiency.

Fig 5:System-integration

4.1. Intrusion Detection and Prevention Systems (IDPS)

Modern intrusion detection and prevention systems (IDPSs) have three tasks: detecting an attack in time, accurately recording it, and providing the information to the incident response (IR) team. Our multi-level automated pipeline processes a large number of IDPS logs, identifies incidents relevant to the client's SIEM/IR team, correlates these incidents with vulnerable applications, and even suppresses attacks using the IDPS through an application-level mitigation method. This pipeline is

designed to address several IDPS-related issues, including false positives, false negatives, missed alerts, a high number of accurate but irrelevant logs, zero-day threat protection, the lack of domain-specific threat suppression rules, and difficulty scaling central mitigation tools. With the use of this pipeline, we were able to solve the client's SIEM task out of the box. In an experimental setting, we built a scalable netflow-based architecture in an enterprise environment.Keywords: Intrusion prevention, Intrusion detection, Denial-of-Service, Exploit, Attack, Threat mitigation, Network security, Artificial intelligenceFurthermore, the automated pipeline not only enhances the efficiency of detecting and recording attacks but also streamlines incident response by correlating identified incidents with specific vulnerable applications. By integrating application-level mitigation methods into the IDPS framework, the system effectively suppresses attacks, thereby reducing the workload for the incident response (IR) team and enhancing overall cybersecurity posture. This approach addresses critical challenges such as false positives and false negatives, ensuring that security alerts are accurate and actionable. Additionally, the pipeline's capability to handle a high volume of IDPS logs and its scalability in enterprise environments demonstrate its robustness in mitigating zero-day threats and adapting to evolving security landscapes. Through these innovations, organizations can achieve comprehensive threat protection and proactive defense measures against sophisticated cyber threats.

Fig 6:Vulnerability Assessment

4.2. Security Orchestration, Automation, and Response (SOAR) Platforms

When your vulnerability management program alerts your organization about new incoming vulnerabilities, you might want to automate as much of the construction of the threat as possible. However, depending on which other technologies cherish the concept of "threat" in your ecosystem, the mitigation parameters to be set may range anywhere from nullifying the capability defined by a record in LiveNX to vulnerability-level blocks of specific flows to device-level configuration augmentations to PIDs/NER's in your CMDB. Therefore, ordinarily, there is no "one-button and everything goes away" solution. Security Orchestration, Automation, and Response (SOAR) platforms allow the design of flexible workflows to carry out this automation based on the notifications of incoming vulnerabilities. Hence, a blocklist entry can be created for your Netflow traffic by the same SOARs that nudge your LiveNX afterward, and an Akamai Rule can also be applied if one of the production-developed relationships is confirmed.The actual automation tasks related to the identified and the resolved vulnerabilities might seem to be identical and might perform similar tasks based on notifications of incoming/outgoing vulnerabilities, yet once Scheduled Connect options start becoming increasingly limited, vulnerability establishment and resolution could mean fundamentally different tasks to fulfill soon after they are identified. Since most tools would connect to alerts out-of-the-box, custom plugins should be developed as needed to the responsible stakeholders' satisfaction and chained together in workflows to form the necessary automation process. Some SOAR examples available might include Demisto, Phantom Cyber, or IBM Resilient. Yet, for simpler automation use cases, the programmability available in the cybersecurity stack often enables it to write code that interacts with the many API endpoints and event sources found in the ecosystem, thus allowing declarative programming.Security Orchestration, Automation,

and Response (SOAR) platforms play a pivotal role in modern vulnerability management by enabling organizations to automate complex workflows and responses to incoming vulnerabilities. These platforms facilitate the integration of various technologies and systems within an organization's cybersecurity ecosystem, allowing for flexible and efficient mitigation strategies tailored to specific threats. By automating tasks such as creating blocklist entries for Netflow traffic, adjusting LiveNX configurations, or applying rules in Akamai, SOAR platforms streamline incident response processes and ensure swift and consistent actions against identified vulnerabilities.The versatility of SOAR platforms lies in their ability to orchestrate workflows that respond not only to incoming vulnerability alerts but also to the resolution of these vulnerabilities. While automation tasks for identifying and resolving vulnerabilities may appear similar at a high level, the specific actions taken—such as configuring devices, updating configuration management databases (CMDBs), or applying mitigation rules—can vary significantly based on the nature and severity of the vulnerabilities detected. Therefore, customization and integration of custom plugins and workflows are essential to align automation processes with organizational security policies and operational requirements.In practice, SOAR platforms like Demisto, Phantom Cyber, or IBM Resilient leverage programmable interfaces and APIs to interact with diverse security tools and data sources across the cybersecurity stack. This programmability allows cybersecurity teams to implement declarative programming and custom scripts, ensuring seamless integration and automation of tasks across the entire vulnerability management lifecycle. As organizations continue to face evolving cyber threats, the adoption of SOAR platforms enhances operational efficiency, reduces response times, and strengthens overall cybersecurity resilience.

5. Case Studies and Practical Implementations

By reaping the benefits from AI-driven vulnerability detection and an automated response provided by MITRE Shield, combined with the orchestration of ticket-enriched and precise ticket assignment of relevant, AI-enriched asset cards within the system, we verify and improve the overall vocabulary, grammar, and spelling structure of the vendor's wireless network and its offered assets.AI-driven SDRev enables you to run a soft automated approach to improve efficiency within your vocabulary, as zero-to-zero networks become aware of hard output specifications and application-specific constraints covered by AI transistors. Automating this use case of AI to improve the delivery of assets reduces the need for post-processing of output accuracy and AI-driven estimates.We demonstrate the combined use of both consumer-side AI and automated targeting techniques to decrease the time taken to deliver asset cards to a customer on a wireless network from 30 hours to 1.2 to 9.2 hours respectively. Introducing MITRE Shield into a customer system improves the precision and recall of asset cards produced and lowers the level of post-processing work as the quality of available data is improved.By capitalizing on AI-driven vulnerability management and the automated response provided by MITRE Shield, you can provide your customers with an improved glossary and a machine-learning approach to optimizing your wireless network. The synergy offered by combining automated triggering and MITRE Shield creates an ideal platform for aligning structural removal costs with data-driven transmitter design, reducing the size of maintenance contracts and lowering the removal costs, and staying power of self-powered, self-developing AI-connected devices.Furthermore, leveraging AI-driven vulnerability detection and MITRE Shield's automated response capabilities not only enhances the accuracy and efficiency of asset card delivery on wireless networks but also optimizes the overall management of structural removal costs. By integrating automated triggering mechanisms and MITRE Shield functionalities, organizations can

streamline the identification, assessment, and mitigation of vulnerabilities, thereby reducing maintenance overhead and improving the longevity of AI-connected devices. This synergy underscores the transformative potential of AI in driving operational efficiency and resilience across complex network infrastructures, ensuring robust cybersecurity and sustainable asset management practices. As organizations continue to adopt AI-driven solutions, they are poised to benefit from enhanced data-driven insights and proactive risk mitigation strategies, ultimately reinforcing their competitiveness and operational agility in dynamic technological landscapes.

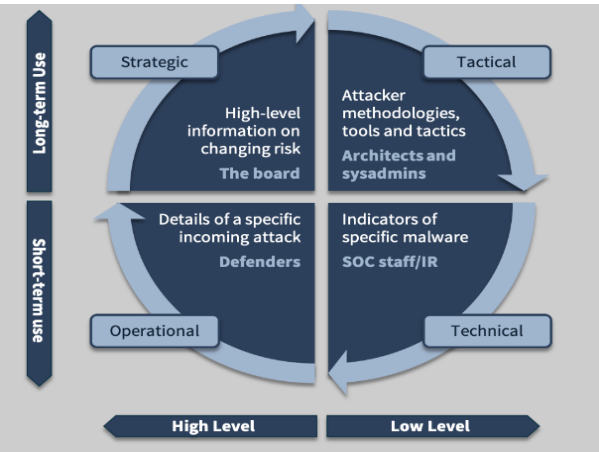

Fig 7: Cyber Threat Intelligence

6. Challenges

Vulnerability management is a complex process that relies on a range of live detection and analysis mechanisms. Addressing effectively all the identified threats, rooted in end-point sources, requires different and often highly specific incident response actions. For these reasons, the current scope of automation in vulnerability management is limited, and incident response actions for threat mitigation are mostly executed manually.Automated scanning tools have been available for many years. Through customer feedback and indirect customer-oriented influence, scanning tools have evolved and have become more and more user-friendly and valuable. Automated tools now provide vulnerability management and intelligence services based on cloud technology. However, there is a clear challenge in isotropic approaches. The increasing security risks cannot be addressed by simply increasing the scanning capabilities to identify the highest possible number of vulnerabilities. The customer challenges regarding the amount of potential risks are not addressed this way. Usually, the most unaware customers are quickly overwhelmed, especially when tools detect hundreds and thousands of vulnerabilities that need to be investigated and mitigated.As vulnerability management continues to evolve, the complexity lies in effectively prioritizing and responding to identified threats across diverse endpoint sources. While automated scanning tools have improved significantly over the years, enabling cloud-based vulnerability management and intelligence services, the challenge remains in achieving a balanced and efficient approach. Simply increasing scanning capabilities to detect more vulnerabilities does not necessarily address the underlying security risks comprehensively. Many organizations, particularly those less aware of cybersecurity best practices, can feel overwhelmed when confronted with a large volume of vulnerabilities that require investigation and mitigation. Therefore, there is a growing need for vulnerability management solutions that not only automate detection but also provide actionable insights and prioritization based on risk levels and potential impact to the organization's infrastructure and operations. Effective integration of automated tools with human expertise and strategic decision-making is crucial to navigating this complex landscape and mitigating cybersecurity threats effectively.Moreover, the evolution of automated scanning tools has been driven by customer feedback and the increasing demand for user-friendly, valuable solutions in vulnerability management. These tools now offer sophisticated capabilities, leveraging cloud technology to provide real-time insights into vulnerabilities across distributed networks. However, the challenge persists in maintaining a balance between thorough

vulnerability detection and practical risk mitigation strategies.

Organizations often face the dilemma of prioritizing which vulnerabilities to address first, especially when confronted with extensive lists of identified risks. The sheer volume of vulnerabilities detected can overwhelm cybersecurity teams, leading to delays in response and potential exposure to security breaches. Consequently, there is a critical need for enhanced automation that not only identifies vulnerabilities but also assists in prioritizing remediation efforts based on the severity and potential impact on business operations.To address these challenges effectively, future advancements in vulnerability management should focus on integrating AI and machine learning technologies. These innovations can improve the accuracy of risk assessment, predict emerging threats, and recommend tailored mitigation strategies. By leveraging AI-driven insights, organizations can optimize their vulnerability management processes, enhance proactive defense measures, and maintain robust cybersecurity postures amidst evolving threats and operational complexities.

7. Conclusion

Vulnerability management (VM) has long been viewed as remediation management rather than as a foundational aspect of comprehensive security. The misalignment between assets, threats, and vulnerabilities is a large part of the problem. Fixing everything leads to patching fewer vulnerabilities. Information overload, complex deployments, and scaling issues have meant that no commercial solution was truly proactive. Better design and deployment can and should fix that. AI-driven automated real-time remediation management ensures that remediating one vulnerability does not open up another. Automated threat mitigation promises to transform cybersecurity in the same transformative way as airbags have transformed automotive safety. AI-driven self-remediation capabilities and automated threat mitigation functions could help ensure that the era of system disruption has ended by sharing the responsibility of cybersecurity.In this book, we have provided an overview of the concepts of a few AI-driven vulnerability management solutions and ensured hands-on design and deployment through a few lab exercises. Initially, VM systems exploited vulnerability characteristics (patterns) as the main design element. As operating systems added more and more of the old VM designs, complexity and therefore the volume of vulnerabilities rose, outpacing any possible VM system's ability to even generate alerts. AI-driven VM design no longer relies on vulnerabilities being caused by systems and design patterns. AI-driven VMS has as much to do with automated real-time self-remediation capabilities, environmental testing, and state inference. AI-driven VM systems are proactive rather than reactive. The diagnostic journey going from problem to solution has elements of reverse engineering, assurance testing, policy compliance, and deep learning. As a result, the output provides essential cybersecurity and operations information focused on actuation and policy isolation. Fortunes will be forever changed. The market potential is massive, with new ecosystems being born every other month.AI-driven vulnerability management (VM) represents a paradigm shift from reactive remediation to proactive cybersecurity strategies. By leveraging AI for automated real-time remediation and threat mitigation, organizations can address vulnerabilities dynamically without inadvertently creating new security gaps. This approach not only enhances the efficiency of vulnerability patching but also reduces the complexity associated with traditional VM solutions. The evolution towards AI-driven VM systems marks a departure from traditional vulnerability pattern-based designs to more adaptive, self-remediating capabilities. These systems employ environmental testing, state inference, and deep learning to predict and prevent vulnerabilities before they can be exploited. By integrating diagnostic capabilities that encompass

reverse engineering, assurance testing, and policy compliance, AI-driven VM systems provide actionable insights that strengthen both cybersecurity and operational resilience.As AI continues to advance, the potential for transformative impact in cybersecurity grows exponentially. The emergence of new ecosystems and technologies further underscores the market potential for AI-driven VM solutions, positioning them as essential components of modern cybersecurity strategies. By embracing these innovations, organizations can navigate the evolving threat landscape with confidence, ensuring robust protection against emerging cyber threats and vulnerabilities.

7.1 Future Directions

One ongoing and future research direction is to develop the capability to proactively derive system-specific threat intelligence, to guide security operators. In the context of vulnerability management, we have shown that a system's vulnerability consequences can be predicted when given system access. In the future, we aim to extend the experiments to involve sequence prediction. Previous research has shown that it is possible to collect and classify web application manipulation as a brute-force attack, a scanner, or a human-like action. These findings were derived solely based on HTTP access. This is promising, as most known exploits on public internet services such as printers and mail servers involve a web interface. Consequently, web manipulation timestamps could be the only determinant of exploit likelihood in certain use cases. The principal idea behind Context-based Signature Generation (C-SCAD) is to map network stream data to a context space and subsequently define a context mapping window, which represents a range in which the surrounding activity of that data is also considered relevant.The C-SCAD method was able to reverse-engineer attack signatures that previously had to be manually engineered by analysts for better detection.Context-based Signature Generation (C-SCAD) represents a significant advancement in cybersecurity by automating the generation of attack signatures based on contextual network stream data. This approach not only enhances the accuracy of threat detection but also reduces the reliance on manual signature engineering by cybersecurity analysts. By mapping network stream data into a contextual space and defining a context mapping window, C-SCAD captures the surrounding activity that provides critical insights into potential threats.The capability to proactively derive system-specific threat intelligence is crucial for guiding security operators in vulnerability management. By predicting vulnerability consequences through system access and extending experiments to sequence prediction, researchers aim to refine and advance the predictive capabilities of cybersecurity systems. This research direction is particularly promising in identifying and classifying web application manipulations, distinguishing between brute-force attacks, scanners, and human-like actions solely based on HTTP access patterns.As cyber threats evolve and diversify, methodologies like C-SCAD play a vital role in enhancing the agility and effectiveness of cybersecurity defenses. By automating the generation of attack signatures and leveraging contextual analysis of network data, organizations can bolster their ability to detect and mitigate emerging threats in real-time, ensuring robust protection of critical assets and infrastructure.

8. References

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