Security against individual attacks for realistic quantum key distribution

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I prove the security of quantum key distribution against individual attacks for realistic signals sources, including weak coherent pulses and downconversion sources. The proof applies to the BB84 protocol with the standard detection scheme (no strong reference pulse). I obtain a formula for the secure bit rate per time slot of an experimental setup which can be used to optimize the performance of existing schemes for the considered scenario.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The first complete protocol for quantum key distribution (QKD) has been introduced by Bennett and Brassard in 1984 [1] following earlier ideas by Wiesner [2]. Since then, this protocol (BB84 for short) has been implemented by several groups [3–13]. For an overview containing more details about the background, the experimental implementation and the classical evaluation procedure see for example [7,14–16].

The basic idea of the BB84 protocol is to use a random string of signal states which, for example, can be realized as single photons in horizontal, vertical, right circular, or left circular polarization states. These are two set of states which are orthogonal within each set, and have overlap probability 1/2 between the sets. If the receiver chooses at random between a polarization analyzer for linear polarization and one for circular polarization, then they obtain in this way a raw key [17]. From this they distill the sifted key by publicly exchanging information about the polarization basis of the signals and the measurement apparatus. They keep only those bits where the basis is the same for the signal and the measurement, since those signals give a deterministic relation between signal and measurement outcome.

The practical implementations deviate from the theoretical abstraction used in the original proposal in two important points. The first is that the signal states do not have the correct overlap probabilities. Especially in the photonic realization, the signals contain contributions from higher photon numbers and from the vacuum state cause this deviation. The second point is that the quantum channel in these implementations (optical fibers) shows a considerable loss. It has been shown earlier [18,19] that the combination of the two effects open up a security gap. The extent of this security gap has been extensively illuminated for different signal sources in [20] giving necessary conditions on the feasibility of QKD without restriction to any particular class of eavesdropping attacks. From these results one can conclude that most current experiments are performed in a parameter regime where the necessary conditions for security are violated.

In the present work I will complement these results by a positive proof of security for a scenario where the power of the eavesdropper is restricted to attacking signals separately (individual attack). This restriction allows us to proof the security for a realistic protocol, i.e. one where all components are known and work efficiently.

It is necessary to distinguish this work from earlier work by other groups. Lo and Chau [21] gave a proof of principle for the security of quantum key distribution. At present, it is not possible to use their proof to implement secure QKD since the procedure involves devices to manipulate qubits coherently in order to allow fault-tolerant computing. The approach of Mayers [22] is certainly the most advanced result towards practical QKD which is provable secure against all eavesdropping attacks on the signals. However, the proof assumes ideal single photon signals, and, at present, we do not have an extension of that proof which can cope with realistic signal sources and effective error correction codes, although work in these directions is in progress.

The restriction to eavesdropping on individual signals allows a much simpler analysis of a realistic scenario, and it is therefore advisable to use this scenario as a study for the generalization in the sense of Mayer’s proof. Furthermore, the results are interesting in their own right: it seems to be impossible to perform collective measurements on the signals with today’s technology. Therefore, QKD secure against individual attack will today create keys which are secure against future developments in coherent eavesdropping strategies, since tomorrows technology cannot be used for todays eavesdropping strategies. This is in contrast to the implication of an increase of future computation power or improvements in algorithms which threatens todays use of classical encryption schemes.

In this paper I will derive a formula for the gain of secure bits per signal sent, that is per time slot of the experiment. These formulas are presented only in the limit of long keys, so that the influence of the necessary authentication of the key and all statistical influences regarding the number of errors etc. can be neglected. It is necessary to embed these results into a full protocol, derived, for example, in [10,23,24] to which I refer the reader for further details.

This paper is organized as follows. In section II I...
will introduce the essential elements of practical quantum cryptography and report the relevant findings for single photon signals. These results are then extended in Section III to signal sources which generate the signal states by rotating a state in one polarization to that of the ideal BB84 polarizations. In section IV, the resulting gain formula is explored for two choices for the signal source, namely weak coherent pulses (WCP) and parametric downconversion (PDC). The results are discussed in section V.

II. SECURITY AGAINST INDIVIDUAL ATTACKS FOR SINGLE PHOTON SOURCES

To investigate the security of QKD one needs to investigate the trade-off between the information gathered by the eavesdropper and the amount of disturbance caused thereby. The trade-off between the Shannon mutual information and the bit error rate in the sifted key has been investigated by several authors for restricted attacks [17,25] and for the general individual attack [26]. The results show that the gathered Shannon information for the typically observed error rate of about 1–5% is too high to allow the sifted key to be used directly for cryptographic purposes. However, we can first correct the errors and then apply the technique of generalized privacy amplification [27] to distill from the sifted key a new shorter key, which fulfills the security requirements. These techniques are purely classical. Both steps, the error correction and the privacy amplification, will reduce the number of gained secure bits.

A. Error correction

Error correction is performed by the exchange of redundant information about the key, e.g. in form of parity bits, via the public channel. Since Eve has access to the public channel, we have to take care of this flow of side-information. This can be done by using a short initial shared secret key to encrypt the parity bits in a one-time pad method. Note that in practice we cannot realize any public channel which is safe against tampering by Eve by technology alone. Therefore, sender and receiver need to share a secret key anyway to overcome this problem by the classical method of authentication [28,29]. As a consequence of this method of control of the side-information, we need to know how many bits need to be encrypted, which is equivalent to the number of exchanged parity bits.

It is clear, that one has to be careful to implement an efficient error correction protocol, since we have to regain at least the number of secret bits used for the encryption of the parity bits. The ratio between minimum number of redundant bits $\frac{N_{\text{corr}}}{n}$ needed to correct a key of length $n$ is given according to Shannon [30] by

$$\frac{N_{\text{corr}}}{n} = -e \log_2 e - (1 - e) \log_2 (1 - e)$$

where $e$ is the observed error rate in the sifted key. In this limit the probability that the errors can be corrected can come arbitrarily close to unity. However, Shannon’s proof of the existence of error correction codes reaching this limit is not constructive, and the limit is obtained only by large codes. These are not easily implemented because of the required computational resources. We have therefore to search for error correction tools which come close to this limit. As discussed in [23], it is hard even to approach the Shannon limit with error correction codes which use uni-directional classical communication only. Fortunately, a more efficient bi-directional code exists [31], which uses $f(e) N_{\text{corr}}^{\text{Shannon}}$ bits for error correction with a correction factor $f(e)$ listed in Table I.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>$e$</th>
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<tr>
<td>0.01</td>
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<td>0.05</td>
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<td>0.1</td>
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<td>0.15</td>
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B. Generalized privacy amplification

In this section I report on the fraction $\tau_1$ of bits by which we need to shorten the sifted key so that we obtain a secure key. The aim of QKD is to obtain a secure key in the sense that Eve has no information on that key. This can be made precise by two properties: 1) a key $x$ of length $n_{\text{final}}$ should have equal a priori probability $p(x) = 2^{-n_{\text{final}}}$ and 2) the difference between the a priori and a posteriori probability, as measured by the Shannon information, should vanish. These two properties can be summarized in the demand that the expected Shannon entropy $H[p(x|M)]_M$ of the a posteriori probability distribution $p(x|M)$ after Eve’s gathering of measurement results and classical communication $M$, should approach $n_{\text{final}}$. (Here $(\ldots)_M$ denotes the expectation value with respect to the measurement outcome $M$.) Generalized privacy amplification [27] achieves that by hashing the corrected sifted key into a shorter key by hash functions [28,29] such that we obtain the bound [27] (see [23] for the extension to the expectation values with respect to $M$)

$$H[p(x|M)]_M \geq n_{\text{final}} - \log_2 (2^{n_{\text{final}}} p_e p(x|M))_M + 1$$

(2)
Here \( p_c[p(x|M)] \) is a measure of the a posteriori probability on the corrected sifted key \( x \) of length \( n_{\text{sift}} \). This measure is the collision probability, defined as

\[
p_c[p(x|M)] = \sum_x p^2(x|M)
\]  

If we choose the length of the final key to be

\[
n_{\text{final}} = n_{\text{sift}}(1 - \tau_1) - n_S,
\]

the estimate becomes, after a further simplifying estimation [27],

\[
H[p(x|M)]_M \geq n_{\text{final}} - \frac{2^{-n_S}}{\ln 2}
\]

with

\[
\tau_1 = 1 + \frac{1}{n_{\text{sift}}} \log_2(p_c[p(x|M)])_M.
\]

Clearly, we can approximate an ideal secret key arbitrarily close by the choice of the security parameter \( n_S \). For long keys, only the shortening fraction \( \tau_1 \) needs to be taken account of.

The above formulas show that an upper bound on the expected collision probability leads to a lower bound on the Shannon information. Such bounds have been provided for the BB84 protocol in [23, 24, 32] for various scenarios. We concentrate here on the case that the errors in the sifted key are corrected (as opposed to discarding the corresponding bits) using the bi-directional error correction procedures. We define the collision probability \( p_c^{(1)}(e) \), as a function of the error rate \( e \) in the sifted key, for a single bit of the corrected sifted key implicitly by \( \langle p_c[p(x|M)]_M = \left(p_c^{(1)}[e]\right)^{n_{\text{final}}} \) and find the bound [23]

\[
p_c^{(1)}(e) \leq \begin{cases} \frac{1}{2} + 2e - 2e^2 & \text{for } e \leq 1/2 \\ 1 & \text{for } 1/2 \leq e \end{cases}
\]

which gives, finally,

\[
\tau_1(e) \leq \begin{cases} \log_2 \left(1 + 4e - 4e^2\right) & \text{for } e \leq 1/2 \\ 1 & \text{for } 1/2 \leq e \end{cases}
\]

The estimate is valid for uni-directional protocols as well since the additional information flow to Eve during bi-directional error correction takes, apparently, the form of a spoiling information in the sense of [27]. As pointed out in [23], we have to be careful in dealing with ambiguous detections, for example clicks in both detectors monitoring orthogonal polarizations. A way to deal with that is to randomly assign a bit value to those events. Discarding those events would open a loophole for the eavesdropper.

C. Gain formula for single photon signals

We can summarize the effects of error correction and privacy amplification by a gain formula for the limit of long keys. It is given by

\[
G_{\text{single}} = \frac{1}{2} \exp \{1 - \tau_1 + f[e] \left(\log_2 e + (1 - e) \log_2(1 - e)\right)\}
\]

Bob’s detector is triggered with probability \( p_{\text{exp}} \), taking into account channel losses and imperfect detection efficiencies, and in half of the cases the signal is entered into the sifted key. From the length of the sifted key we have to deduct the cost of error correction and of privacy amplification. The resulting rate for a lossless transmission, \( p_{\text{exp}} = 1 \), and ideal error correction, \( f[e] = 1 \), is shown in figure 1. From there it becomes clear that the maximal tolerated error rate for this approach is around 11%.

III. EXTENSION TO MULTI-PHOTON SOURCES WITH IDEAL POLARIZATIONS

To generalize the results of the previous section to realistic signal sources we first need to consider which signals states we can generate. We find that the typical sources show a simple structure which allows us to describe the optimal eavesdropping strategy. As a consequence, we can bound Eve’s collision probability using the results derived for single photon signals.

A. Realistic signal sources

The signal sources described here generate the signal from some state in one polarization mode by changing its polarization to one of the four BB84 polarization modes.
Typically, there will be no fixed relation between the optical phase of subsequent signals. As a result, Eve “sees” the phase averaged form of the signals [20] which take the form of a mixture of Fock states in the chosen polarization mode. (The off-diagonal terms average out to zero.) This observation, in fact, simplifies the analysis of security.

It should be noted that even if the source should bear some phase relation between subsequent pulses, this relation can be destroyed by including a phase randomizer which selects at random an optical phase for each signal. This is needed, for example, for the “plug and play scheme” by the Geneva group [6]. Note that the so-called phase encoding [3] is basically equivalent to the the polarization encoding. This is so because the four BB84 polarizations can be expressed, mathematically, as a relative phase between two modes. Phase encoding uses the relative phase between two spatially separated modes (in the same fiber and the same polarization mode). They are therefore equivalent. However, in some implementations of the spatial mode pulses has a bigger amplitude to implement some kind of strong reference pulse for an interference in Bob’s detector, as proposed in the two state protocol [33] and the “4+2” protocol [18]. The security analysis presented here does not apply to these set-ups.

B. Estimation of the collision probability

We have seen above that for the signal sources investigated here, the signals are mixtures of Fock states in the chosen polarization mode. It turns out that Eve can split the photon number of each signal containing two or more photons by extracting one or more photons out of the signal such that both parts retain their original polarization. This can be achieved by interactions of the Jaynes-Cummings type which are preceded by a quantum non-demolition measurement of the total photon number of the signal. This stands not in contrast to the statement of Yuen [19] that is not possible to extract a photon from an arbitrary state, since here we are talking only about states with known total photon number, and where all photons are in a single, though unknown, mode. On the other hand, it is unclear what it would mean for other photons to extract a photon such that the extracted photon and the remaining states have an unaltered polarization. Eve can perform a measurement on her photons after receiving the information about the polarization basis of the signals, and she therefore will know the bit-value of these signals. On the other hand, she does not cause any errors on Bob’s side, since the photons arrive there with the original polarization.

We can summarize this in the statement that the collision probability on each bit in the sifted key which stems from a multi-photon signal is equal to 1, and all errors in the sifted key are due to eavesdropping on single photon signals contribution to the sifted key.

The collision probability for the sifted key factorizes into the product of collision probabilities for each bit. If we know an upper bound on the number $n$ of multi-photon signals contributing to the sifted key, then we can estimate the collision probability on the sifted key of length $n_{sif}$ by the single bit collision probabilities for single photon signals $p_c^{(1)}$ and that for multi-photon signals $p_c^{(m)} = 1$ as

$$p_c \leq \left( p_c^{(m)} \right)^m \left( p_c^{(1)} \right)^{n_{sif} - m} = \left( p_c^{(1)} \right)^{n_{sif} - m}.$$ (10)

The value of the error rate at which $p_c^{(1)}$ from Eq. 7 is evaluated, has to be rescaled since all errors are assumed to stem from eavesdropping on the single-photon signals. We therefore find

$$p_c \leq \left( p_c^{(1)} \right)^{n_{sif} - m} \left( 1 + \frac{n_{sif} - m}{n_{sif}} \right)^{n_{sif} - m},$$ (11)

which gives the fraction of the key which has to be discarded during privacy amplification as

$$\tau_1^{(m)}(e^{(1)}) = 1 + \frac{n_{sif} - m}{n_{sif}} \log_2 p_c^{(1)} \left[ 1 + \frac{n_{sif}}{n_{sif} - m} \right].$$ (12)

The number of multi-photon bits contributing to the sifted key can be bounded once we know the source characteristic in the form of probabilities $S_0$, $S_1$, and $S_m$ for the signal to contain zero, one, or more than one photon. Eve will use all multi-photon signals while she suppresses partly single-photon signal to obtain the desired fraction $p_{exp}$ of signals successfully detected by Bob. Therefore the expectation value for the number $m$ of signals stemming from multi-photon signals is given by $\langle m \rangle = \frac{S_m}{p_{exp}}$.

We can use a theorem by Hoeffding [34] to relate the expected number of multi-photon signals $\langle m \rangle$ to the actually created number of such signals $m$ for a key of length $n_{sif}$ with some probability. The statement is that the inequality

$$|\langle m \rangle - m| \leq \delta n$$ (13)

for some chosen value of $\delta$ holds with a probability $P > 1 - \exp \left( -2n\delta^2 \right)$. This means, that we can choose $m = \langle m \rangle$ since we deal in this article only with the limit of large keys. For experimental realizations, however, one has to keep an eye on the choice of $\delta$ which might be rather small. Then $n$ has to be quite large to obtain a reasonable value for $P$. More discussion concerning the statistical issue can be found in [23].

C. Gain formula for realistic signal sources

The gain formula for the considered signal sources is now given by
\[ G^{(\text{multi})} = \frac{1}{2} p^{\text{post}} p^{\text{exp}} \frac{n_{\text{sif}} - \langle m \rangle}{n_{\text{sif}}} \]  
\[ \times \left( 1 - \log_2 \left[ 1 + 4e \frac{n_{\text{sif}}}{n_{\text{sif}} - \langle m \rangle} - 4 \left( e \frac{n_{\text{sif}}}{n_{\text{sif}} - \langle m \rangle} \right)^2 \right] \right) 
+ f[e] \left[ e \log_2 e + (1 - e) \log_2 (1 - e) \right] . \]

Here I included a factor \( p^{\text{post}} \) as the post-selection probability of the signal. We need this for a consistent presentation of the results using parametric downconversion, since there Alice performs a post-selection for each time slot. The quantities \( p^{\text{exp}} \) and \( S_0, S_1, \) and \( S_m \) refer always to the post-selected signals. All parameters needed to evaluate this expression are actually observables of the experiment. The value of \( n_{\text{sif}} \) is agreed between Alice and Bob, and the values of \( p^{\text{exp}}, e \) are directly observed. The value of \( \langle m \rangle = \frac{S_m}{p^{\text{exp}}} \) is indirectly measurable in Alice’s laboratory. We can reformulate the expression for the gain as

\[ G = \frac{1}{2} p^{\text{post}} p^{\text{exp}} \left( \frac{p^{\text{exp}} - S_m}{p^{\text{exp}}} \right) \]  
\[ \times \left( 1 - \log_2 \left[ 1 + 4e \frac{p^{\text{exp}}}{p^{\text{exp}} - S_m} - 4 \left( e \frac{p^{\text{exp}}}{p^{\text{exp}} - S_m} \right)^2 \right] \right) 
+ f[e] \left[ e \log_2 e + (1 - e) \log_2 (1 - e) \right] \]

so that it is expressed entirely in measurable quantities. In this form we can use it to estimate the gain for a running experiment without having to implement the classical procedures of error correction and privacy amplification.

### IV. SIMULATION FOR EXPERIMENTS

To simulate the gain we can obtain from an experimental set-up, we need to model the photon number distribution of the source in more detail. Here we need more than the three probabilities \( S_0, S_1, \) and \( S_m \) since the probability \( p^{\text{exp}} \) depends on the photon number distribution within the multi-photon signals as well. Furthermore, we need to model the expected error rate of the experiment.

In my calculation I take account of the photon number distribution of the signal source and the losses in the quantum channel. Bob’s detection unit varies in different set-ups by the number of detectors etc. The parameters entering the calculation here are the single-photon detection efficiency \( \eta_B \) and the dark count rate \( d_B \), both given for the whole detection unit. The dark count rate is measured as dark count detections per time slot, i.e. gating window.

\[ p^{\text{exp}} = p^{\text{signal}} + d^{\text{dark}} - \frac{p^{\text{signal}}}{p^{\text{exp}}} \]  
\[ \frac{p^{\text{dark}}}{p^{\text{exp}}} = d_B . \]

The error rate stems, again, from two sources. The first is an error rate for the detected signal photons, which is due to alignment errors or fringe visibility. The probability of an error per time slot due to this mechanism is modeled by \( p^{\text{error}} = c p^{\text{signal}} \) with a constant \( c \). The dark count contribution to the same error probability is given by \( p^{\text{error}} = \frac{1}{2} d_B \) since a dark count will cause an error only in half the cases. Then the error rate in the sifted key is modeled by

\[ e = \frac{c p^{\text{signal}} + \frac{1}{2} d_B}{p^{\text{exp}}} = \frac{c p^{\text{signal}}}{\frac{1}{2} d_B} . \]

For optical fibers, the losses in the quantum channel can be derived from the loss coefficient \( \alpha \) measured in dB/km, the length of the fiber \( l \) in km and the loss in Bob’s detection unit \( L_c \) in dB as

\[ \eta_T = 10^{-\frac{\alpha l + L_c}{10}} . \]

Typical values for the three telecommunication windows at 0.8\( \mu m \), 1.3\( \mu m \), and 1.5\( \mu m \) are 2.5 dB/km, 0.35 dB/km, and 0.2 dB/km respectively.

### B. Weak coherent pulses

In most experiments for QKD the signal source is a strongly attenuated laser pulse. Due to the pump mechanism, two subsequent pulses of a laser diode shows no correlation in the optical phase and, therefore, this source falls into the category for which our arguments apply.

The photon number is Poisson distributed with \( S_i = \exp(\mu) \mu^i/i! \) and mean photon number \( \mu \). Therefore we obtain

\[ e = \frac{c p^{\text{signal}}}{\frac{1}{2} d_B} . \]
which allow us together with the Eq. (15,16,17,18) and a post-selection probability \( p_{\text{post}} = 1 \) to calculate the expected gain per time slot of an experiment with weak coherent pulses.

We evaluate the resulting gain rate using parameter sets taken from the literature. When we keep all parameters fixed and vary the expected photon number of the signal, we obtain a gain curve with a clear maximum. Furthermore, if the the photon number is too low, we cannot obtain a positive gain because of the dark count rate of Bob’s detector. On the other hand, for large photon numbers we cannot obtain a positive gain because of the high multi-photon probability for the signals. We concentrate on the optimal choice of the expected photon number which yields the maximal gain rate. Now we can vary the length of the transmission line. The resulting graphs are shown in figure 2. We see that the gain rate drops roughly exponentially with the length of the transmission before it starts to drop faster due to the increasing influence of the dark counts. The initial behavior is mainly due to the multi-photon component of the signals while the influence of the error-correction part is small. In this regime we can bound the gain by the approximation

\[
G \leq \frac{1}{2} \left(p_{\exp} - S_m\right)
\]

\[
= \frac{1}{2} \left\{(1 + \mu) \exp(-\mu) - \exp(-\eta_B \eta_T \mu)\right\}
\]

This expression is optimized if we choose \( \mu = \mu_{\text{optm}} \) which fulfills

\[
\eta_B \eta_T \exp(-\eta_B \eta_T \mu_{\text{optm}}) - \mu_{\text{optm}} \exp(-\mu_{\text{optm}}) = 0 .
\]

Since for a realistic setup we expect that \( \eta_B \eta_T \ll 1 \), we find \( \mu_{\text{optm}} \approx \eta_B \eta_T \). In this approximation we find

\[
G \approx \frac{1}{4} \eta_B^2 \eta_T^2 .
\]

As the distance increases and the influence of the dark counts and the error correction grows, this approximation is no longer valid. Instead, we find in the numerical simulations that the optimal photon number is even lower. Note that in the real experiments much higher photon number have been used. Typically, these higher photon numbers do not allow secure key distribution over the reported distances.

The approximate situation described above illuminates another interesting feature. As noted in [20], technical limitations on detectors limit the distance over which we can perform secure QKD with weak coherent pulses, and the presented security proof is in accordance with it. This limit can be stretched as the technology improves. However, the obtained distance is only one characteristics of a setup. Another is the obtained rate. We find that the gain rate per time slot is limited already by the use of the Poissonian photon number distribution and the loss in the optical fiber.

We can evaluate Eqn. (26) for perfect detection devices and get a bound 1 shown in Fig. 3 in the case of the KTH set-up. The gap between bound 1 and the and the exact result shows how much room is left for improvements of Bob’s detection apparatus. The bounds 2 and 3 take into account in addition to the fiber loss the loss in Bob’s detection device and the detection efficiency. We find that bound 3 is already a good approximation to the exact results, at least for short and medium distances. This shows that the multi-photon aspect is for these distances the dominating effect compared to the effect of error correction and the influence of eavesdropping on single-photon signals, which are responsible for the gap between bound 3 and the exact curve. In order to compare the performance of different setups, one would need

\[
S_m = 1 - (1 + \mu) \exp(-\mu)
\]

\[
p_{\text{exp}}^{\text{signal}} = 1 - \exp(-\eta_B \eta_T \mu)
\]
η_{3} \text{ represents the approximation (23).} 

Therefore, bound 2 takes into account additionally the given loss in Bob’s receiver, while bound 3 even includes the detection inefficiency of Bob’s detector. Therefore, bound 3 represents the approximation (23).

to multiply the gain rate with the signal repetition rate of the set-up to obtain the rate of secret bits per second. This repetition rate may be vastly different for some applications, so that the gain rate shown in Fig. 2 is only a starting point in optimizing the secure bit rate for a specific application. However, it shows clearly the variation of the performance as the distance varies, including the maximal possible distance.

C. Parametric downconversion for triggering

The results of the previous section illustrates that the coverable distance for QKD is limited. As shown explicitly in [20], this distance can be increased by the usage of other signal sources, especially by the use of parametric downconversion. Note, however, that it has been shown there that even perfect single photon sources will lead to a limited coverable distance due to Bob’s dark count rate.

I will discuss here only the use of parametric downconversion (PDC) as a triggering mechanism, although more sophisticated techniques using EPR states are possible. For that we consider the non-degenerate parametric amplifier described by the parameter \( \chi \) as the product of the coupling constant and the interaction time of the process. This creates the two-mode state [35]

\[ |\Psi\rangle = (\cosh \chi)^{-1} \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} (\tanh \chi)^{n}|n, n\rangle . \] (27)

Alice monitors the first mode with a detector described by detection efficiency \( \eta_{A} \) and dark count rate \( d_{A} \). Only coincidences between Alice’s and Bob’s detector will be taken into account when forming the sifted key. For a low dark count rate and a small parameter \( \chi \) (note that \( \sinh^{2} \chi \) is the expected photon number in one mode) we can neglect coincidences between dark counts and detection events and associate Alice’s detection event with the POM element

\[ E_{\text{click}} = d_{A}|0\rangle\langle 0| + \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} (1 - (\eta_{A})^{n})|n\rangle\langle n| . \] (28)

The signal state conditioned on Alice’s detection event is then given by

\[ p_{\text{click}} = \frac{1}{p_{\text{post}}} \text{Tr}_{A} (E_{\text{click}}|P_{\text{si}}\rangle\langle \Psi|) \] (29)

\[ \text{post} = \frac{d_{A}}{\cosh^{2} \chi} + \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} (1 - (\eta_{A})^{n}) \frac{\tanh^{2n} \chi}{\cosh^{2} \chi} \] (30)

with the post-selection probability as normalization factor

\[ p_{\text{post}} = \frac{d_{A}}{\cosh^{2} \chi} + \frac{1}{\cosh^{2} \chi} \left( \frac{1}{1 - \tanh^{2} \chi} - \frac{1}{1 - (\eta_{A}) \tanh^{2} \chi} \right) . \]

This gives us the photon number distribution of the signals which are obtained from this seed state by polarization rotation. From the photon number distribution we can calculate \( S_{m} \) by summation and \( p_{\text{signal}} \), via the photo detection formula [35] as,

\[ S_{m} = 1 - \frac{1}{p_{\text{post}} \cosh^{2} \chi} (d_{A} + \eta_{A} \tanh^{2} \chi) \] (31)

\[ p_{\text{signal}} = \frac{1}{p_{\text{post}} \cosh^{2} \chi} \times \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} [1 - (\eta_{A})^{n}] [1 - (\eta_{T} \eta_{B})^{n}] \tanh^{2n} \chi \] (32)

As in the case of the WCP scenario, we are now in the position to calculate the gain rate of a setup from experimental parameters. The simulations use experimental values for the transmission line and detectors which
are the same as in the WCP case. There are two different scenarios: Either the non-degenerate downconversion produces photons at the same frequency, or one can use downconversion with different frequencies such that the frequency of Alice’s photon has a wavelength convenient for detection, while the other photon’s wavelength falls into one of the three telecommunication windows for optimal propagation along the fiber or open air. To illustrate the calculation we assumed the situation where one mode is adapted to the 800 nm detectors of the British Telecom experiment, while the signal mode is emitted in one of the four modes used already for the WCP case. The results of this hypothetical experiment is shown in Fig. 4. We find an increase of the covered distance against the use of WCP source, but this happens at the expense of a lower rate per signal.

![FIG. 4. Parametric downconversion as triggering device: The rate of secure key bits per time slot for realistic parameters described in the literature. The triggering mode is adapted to the 800 nm detector of the BT experiment. The signal mode is adapted to one of the four studied cases. (See table IV B). The rate needs to be multiplied with the repetition rate of the apparatus to obtain the true rate per second.](image)

To understand the decrease of the rate, we can now bound the maximal gain per time slot in correspondence to the calculation for weak coherent states. It is now convenient to introduce the expected photon number \( \mu = \sinh^2 \chi \). In the optimal case, Alice’s triggering detector is perfect (\( \eta_A = 1 \) and \( d_A = 0 \)), and we neglect the negative contribution of privacy amplification and error correction. Then we find, again using \( \eta := \eta_B \eta_T \),

\[
S_m = p_{\text{post}} \frac{\mu^2}{(1 + \mu)^2} \tag{33}
\]

\[
p_{\text{exp}} = p_{\text{post}} \frac{\eta \mu}{1 + \eta \mu} \tag{34}
\]

so that we find for the gain

\[
G \leq \frac{1}{2} \mu \left( \frac{\eta}{1 + \eta \mu} - \frac{\mu}{(1 + \mu)^2} \right). \tag{35}
\]

Now the optimal mean photon number \( \mu_{\text{opt}} \) satisfies

\[
-2\mu_{\text{opt}} - 2\eta^2 \mu_{\text{opt}}^3 + \eta(1 + 3\mu_{\text{opt}} - \mu_{\text{opt}}^3 + \mu_{\text{opt}})^2 = 0 \tag{36}
\]

which leads for small values of \( \eta \) to \( \mu \approx \frac{1}{8} \eta^2 \). In the same limit the gain rate is approximated by

\[
G \approx \frac{1}{8} \eta \mu \tag{37}
\]

This bounds the obtainable rate for the case that Bob’s detectors are perfect, so that \( \eta \to \eta_T \). We find that here weak coherent states have a potential gain rate per time slot which is twice as big as the one of parametric down conversion. The reason is that the photon number distribution for PDC sources is basically thermal, which shows a higher multi-photon contribution compared to a Poisson distribution with the same mean photon number. For practical realization, however, a factor of two is not that significant, and the gap between gain rate of secure bits with imperfect tools is still by orders of magnitude separated from this limit. Therefore the question remains open, which technology allows a simpler approach to higher rates.

Note that one would need to take into account the loss occurring when Alice couples the photon for Bob into a fiber. This loss can be easily incorporated in this calculations since the resulting photon number distribution of the signals can be obtained using the photon count formulas. Here, however, we do not study this additional parameter. The corresponding formula are given in appendix A.

V. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper I presented a security proof of quantum cryptography which is restricted to individual attacks. This proof takes into account the non-ideal signal sources and detectors. Moreover, it allows to compare the performance for different arrangements with respect to the overall gain rate. In this sense it can help to decide which type of source to use, for example weak coherent pulses or downconversion, depending on the available technology and the task fixing, for example, wavelength and distance. For existing experiments, it allows to find the optimal mean photon number of the source and the optimal working point for Bob’s detectors.

We found that the use of PDC sources with a simple triggering mechanism does not increase the overall rate of secure bits, but it allows to increase the distance which can be covered by experiments. The rate could be improved by a more sophisticated detection mechanism, where Alice could, at least partly, determine the number.
of pairs produced in a time slot. Even if this mechanism does not work perfectly, it would improve the rate and distance.

Our examples show that the use of WCP sources gives, typically, higher rates per time slot than the use of PDC sources, as long as the distance is not too big. I would like to point out again, that in the end the total rate, that is the rate per time slot times the repetition rate of the set-up, is what counts. It depends therefore on the bottle-neck of the set-up which design can be made the fastest.

The problem of non-ideal sources in the presence of loss is known since 1995. There have been proposals to use strong reference pulses in the two-state protocol [14] and the BB84 protocol [18], but so far these ideas have not been implemented. The reference pulses make it more difficult for Eve to block signals, since in those schemes Bob measures the interference of the strong reference pulse with the weak signal, so that the absence of the weak signal will lead to an error in half of the cases. I would like to point out, that the security of this scheme has not been fully analyzed yet even for individual attacks, but this scheme is certainly the hope for the future to improve the here analyzed BB84 protocol.

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APPENDIX A: PDC WITH FINITE COUPLING EFFICIENCY

In this appendix I provide the straightforward derived formulas for the case where we use a parametric down-conversion source for the triggering of the signal, and the signal travelling to Bob couples only with a finite efficiency $\eta_C$ into the fiber. All losses on Alice's side which cannot be accessed by Eve can be incorporated into this efficiency. Conditioned on a click in Alice's triggering detector we find the following results:

\[
S_0 = \frac{1}{p_{\text{post}} \cosh^2 \chi} \left( d_A + \frac{1}{1 - (1 - \eta_C) \tanh^2 \chi} - \frac{1}{1 - (1 - \eta_C)(1 - \eta_A) \tanh^2 \chi} \right) \tag{A2}
\]

\[
S_1 = \frac{\eta_C \tanh^2 \chi}{p_{\text{post}} \cosh^2 \chi} \frac{1}{1 - (1 - \eta_C) \tanh^2 \chi} \frac{1}{1 - (1 - \eta_C)(1 - \eta_A) \tanh^2 \chi} \tag{A3}
\]

\[
S_M = 1 - S_0 - S_1 \tag{A4}
\]

\[
p_{\text{exp}} = \frac{1}{p_{\text{post}} \cosh^2 \chi} \frac{1}{1 - \tanh^2 \chi} \frac{1}{1 - (1 - \eta_C)(1 - \eta_A) \tanh^2 \chi} \tag{A5}
\]

With these quantities the we can, as before, determine the optimal gain for a given setup.

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