

Developing a Framework to Improve Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity

Presented by Joe Wilson
Network Security Engineer
TelcoCapital IT Systems, LLC

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Cybersecurity Framework Development: Design Science Research toward an Intercloud
Transparent Bridge Architecture

(ITCOBRA)

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Abstract

This dissertation uses design science research to develop a cloud-based simulator that implements industry standards for developing a cybersecurity framework for critical infrastructure protection (CIP) in the United States. This research asserts that an agile and neutral framework extending throughout the cyber-threat plane is needed for effectively defending against sophisticated cybersecurity attacks. An effective framework should have predictive analysis and interdiction (PAI) capabilities for preemptive threat mitigation. The outcome of this research is the Intercloud Transparent Bridge Architecture/Simulator Model (ITCOBRA/SM). Inspiration for the ITCOBRA/SM is drawn from the intersection of cloud computing advancements, information technology (IT), cybersecurity, and critical infrastructure protection techniques. The operational context of the ITCOBRA is analogous to that used by meteorologist to forecast the weather. Weather forecasts are made by collecting quantitative data about the current state of the atmosphere on a given location. Using scientific understanding of atmospheric processes, meteorologist can project how the atmosphere will evolve over time (Intellicast.com). Likewise, the ITCOBRA enables projections to be made about events occurring in the cyber threat plane. Using Markov modeling, holistic information about the state of cyber critical systems is collected. Accelerated threat analytics in centralized databases integrate, correlate and synchronize the information to make projections about how threats will evolve and which systems are at risk. The gathered intelligence is used to make informed decisions that reflect organizations' predefined security policies. It is noteworthy that the accelerated space-time domain is simulated by the ITCOBRA/SM. In real world deployments that use the ITCOBRA Framework

(“Framework”), the accelerated predictive analysis is performed by applications resident in the system. It is also envisioned that quantitative data will be extracted from an organization such as the US Computer Emergency Readiness Team (US-CERT), and/or similar databases. Autonomic computational methods are recommended in future research for the ITCOBRA Framework to enable organic functionality for higher levels of efficiency. Finally, this research is timely since cybersecurity practices in the United States diverge significantly and have failed to establish a 21st century cyber protection framework for the nation’s critical systems (Shiffman & Gupta, 2013).

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Introduction

Cloud Paradigm. The cloud paradigm introduces significant performance metrics and economies of scale over traditional IT technologies. Web-based technologies are increasingly being used to deploy core services in critical infrastructure cybersecurity protection networks (Cardellini, Casalicchio, Tucci, & dei Ministri, 2006). Simultaneously, there is on-going research towards developing an Inter-Cloud Architecture (ICA) to address architectural challenges in creating a transparent information plane over different provider systems to allow seamless application services (Demchenko, Ngo, Makkes, Stgrijkers, & de Laat, 2012) . Advancements in cloud computing and cloud simulation technologies provide organizations the opportunity to evaluate application scenarios that would be too costly or prohibitive in today's vendor specific cloud computing environments.

Effectively coordinating and managing cybersecurity data requires a federated intercloud architecture. The need for intercloud negotiation is a topic of high interest and established as a priority in literature (R. N. Calheiros, Ranjan, De Rose, & Buyya, 2009). The global expansion of the Internet makes it possible for adversaries to launch cyber attacks from any location on the globe (Bhatia, 2011; Geers, 2010). In this dissertation research the ITCOBRA/SM model will be developed to answer the research question related to comprehensive cybersecurity coordination. The requirement for dynamic exchange of cybersecurity information remains a difficult, unresolved challenge for organizations responsible for critical infrastructure protection (Warfield, 2012). The threats posed by cyber terrorism have been a major topic for public and private

organizations during the past decade (Fischer, 2011). The corollary is that the vitality of the nation's economy and the livelihood of its citizens depend on these critical systems and structures (Moteff, 2010). The call for the federal government to modernizing the current protection framework is also growing in government and industry. This research investigates and implements innovations in emerging cloud computing technologies for high density cyber security coordination.

The ITCOBRA/SM accomplishes inter-domain communications in a federated deployment by focusing on the security access domain, policy management and open source API (Application Program Interface) standards. The artifact is run and tested on a general purpose computer in a lab environment. This dissertation extends the research instruments and theory developed by (A. Beloglazov & Buyya, 2011; 2011; R. N. Calheiros, Ranjan, Beloglazov, De Rose, & Buyya, 2011; 2010; Martin, 2011). Design Science Research (DSR) is used in this study to explore the intersection of CIP strategies, cybersecurity frameworks, cloud computing technologies and virtualized resource modeling and simulation.

Research Methodology for the ITCOBRA/SM

The research methodology for this dissertation is shown in Figure 1. This research belongs to the design science paradigm (A. R. Hevner, March, Park, & Ram, 2004; March & Smith, 1995). It strives for developing a practically relevant IT artifact in form of a domain independent, purpose specific artifact (Becker, Janiesch, Pfeiffer, & Seidel, 2006). The research methodology is based on the work of Takeda et al. (Takeda, Veerkamp, & Yoshikawa, 1990).

Research Method

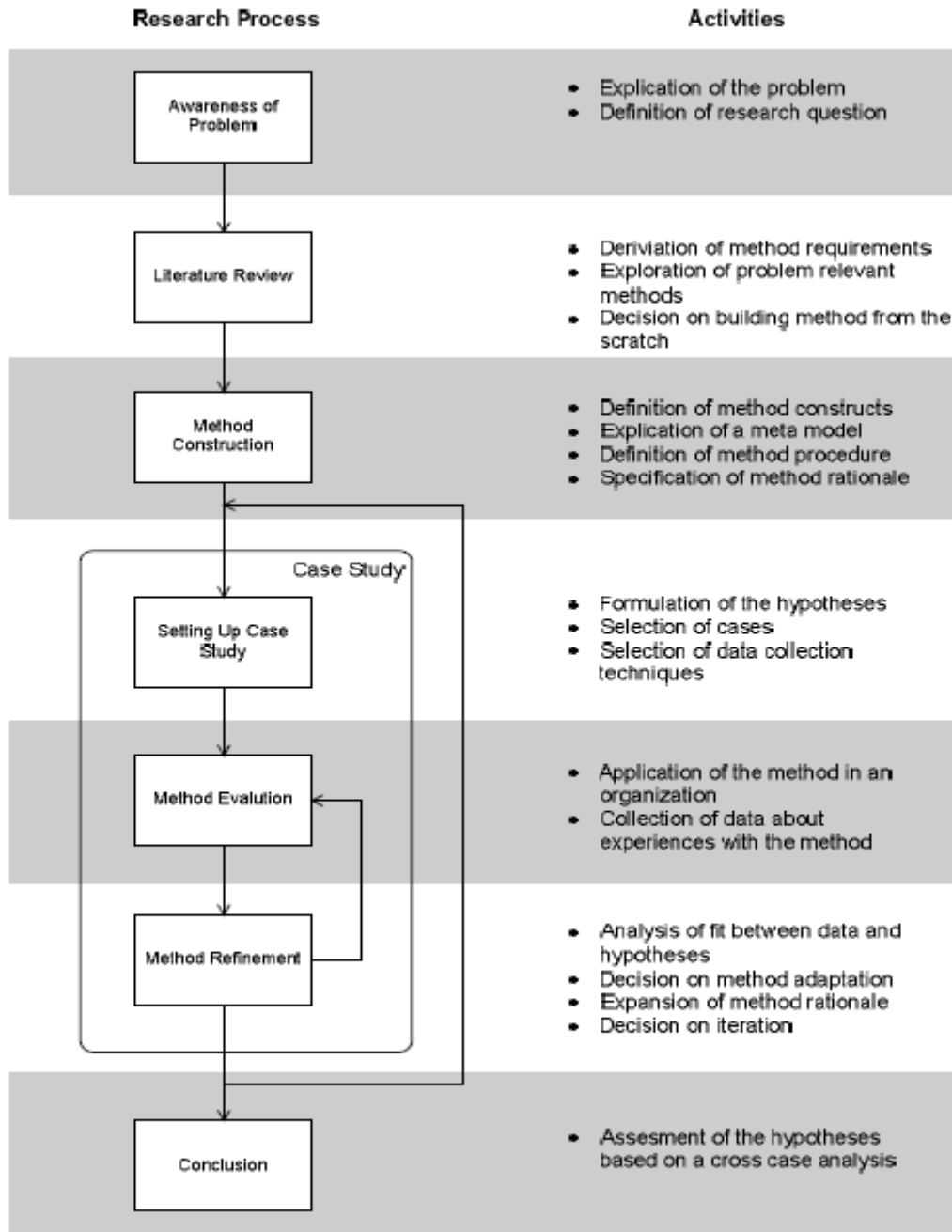


Figure 1. Research Methodology of this Paper

Background of the Study

Critical infrastructures are dispersed throughout the United States government and private industry. The majority of these are in private sector organizations that are subject to direct government oversight. Catastrophic disruptions to any of these systems can significantly impact United States societies (Warfield, 2012).

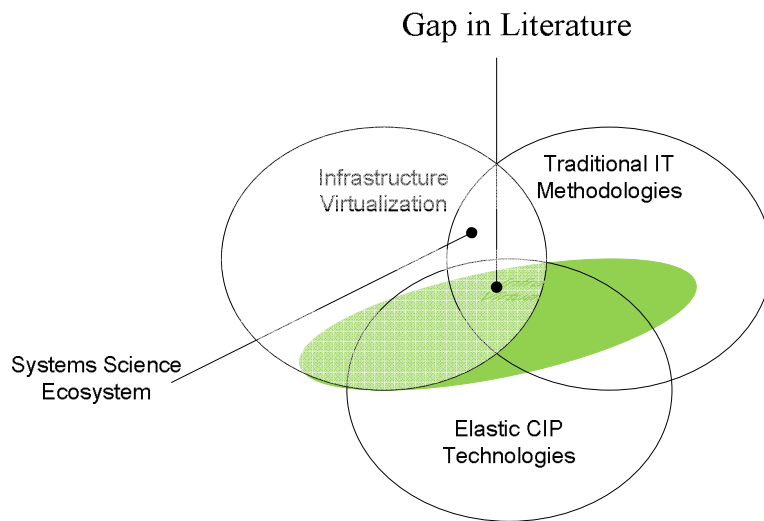
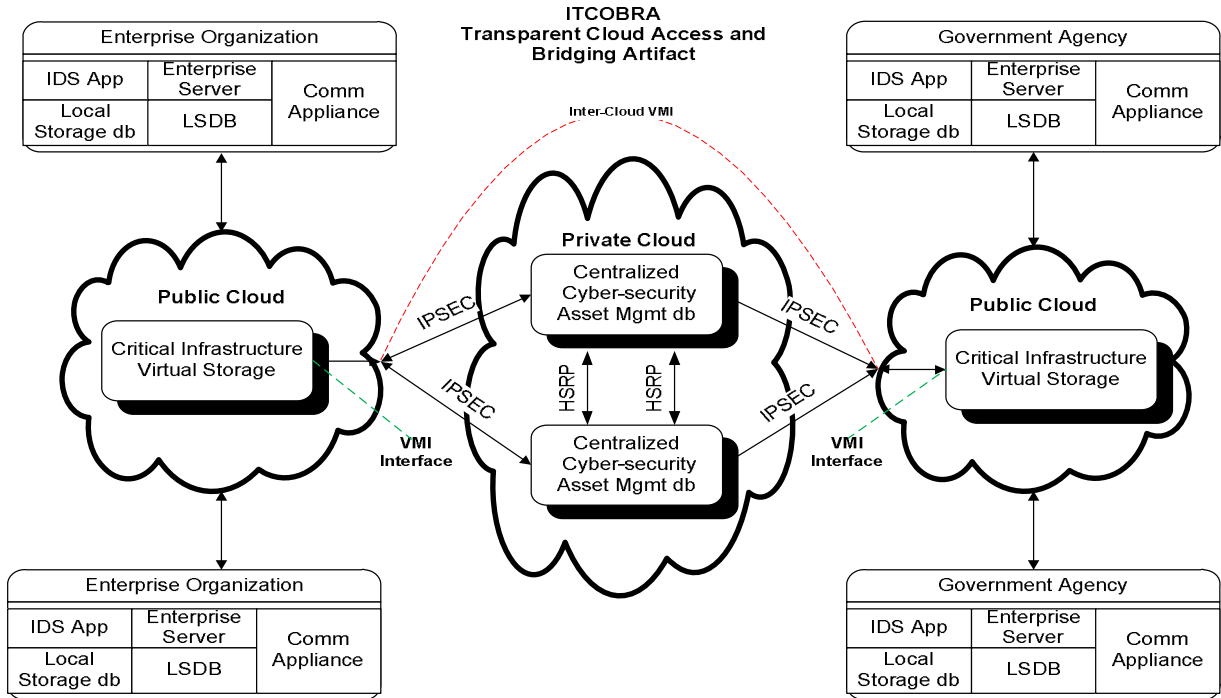


Figure 2. ITCOBRA/SM Intervention

The three synthesis domains for the transparent cloud access and Development/Prototyping methodology to address the gap in current research and development are shown in Figure 2. Source: The author of this dissertation research. Adapted from Martin (2011)

This research develops an intercloud communications artifact for more efficient coordination of critical infrastructure information in public and private organizations. The ITCOBRA/SM prototype uses existing techniques for developing the prototype model.

ITCOBRA Initial Conceptual Diagram



Legend:
IDS Intrusion Detection System
LSDB Local Storage Database
VMI Virtual Machine Interface

Figure 3. The ITCOBRA/P Simple Message Exchange
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CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical infrastructures are dispersed throughout the United States government and private industry. The majority of these are in private sector organizations that are subject to direct government oversight. Catastrophic disruptions to any of these systems can significantly impact United States societies (Warfield, 2012).

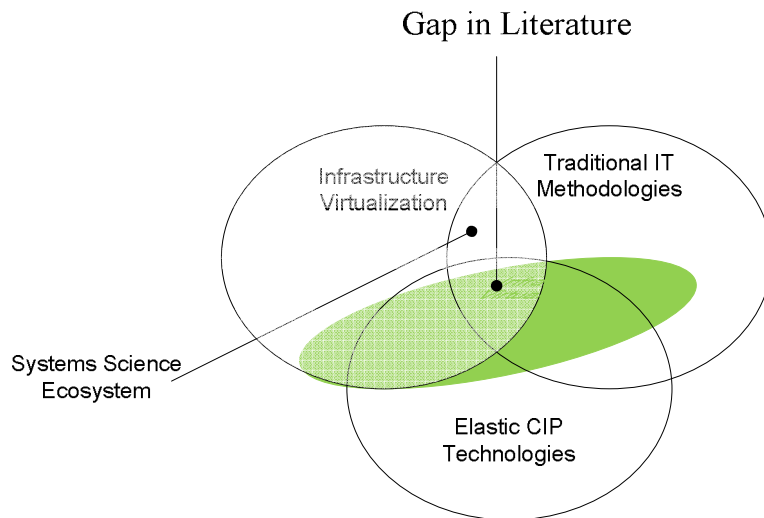


Figure 4. Gap in Literature

In Figure 4 (recaptured from Figure 3) shows the research domains and development environment that the transparent cloud access and Development/Prototyping methodology are synthesized to address the gap in current research and development. Source: The author of this dissertation research. Adapted from Martin (2011).

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APPE DIX A. CYBERSECURITY BROADCASTS

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APPENDIX B. DEFINITION OF TERMS

- **Autonomic computing** - *computer systems capable of self-management.*
- **Client–server model** - *Client–server computing refers broadly to any distributed application that distinguishes between service providers (servers) and service requesters (clients).*
- **Cloud Computing** - *A model for enabling convenient, on-demand network access to a shared pool of configurable computing resources (e.g., networks, servers, storage, applications, and services) that can be rapidly provisioned and released with minimal management effort or service provider interaction. (www.nist.gov)*
- **Cloud Oriented Architecture** - *A term coined by Jeff Barr at Amazon Web Services to describe an architecture where applications act as services in the cloud and serve other applications in the cloud environment.*
- **Cloud provider** - *A company that provides cloud-based platform, infrastructure, application, or storage services to other organizations and/or individuals, usually for a fee.*
- **Collaboration** - *Means the process of working together to achieve shared goals.*
- **Coordinate** - *A consensus decision-making process in which the named coordinating department or agency is responsible for working with the affected departments and agencies to achieve consensus and a consistent course of action.*
- **Critical infrastructure** - *critical infrastructure has the meaning given the term in 42 U.S.C. 5195c(e), “systems and assets, whether physical or virtual, so vital to the United States that the incapacity or destruction of such systems and assets would have a debilitating impact on security, national economic security, national public health or safety, or any combination of those matters.*
- **Data Transfer Time** - *The time taken by a given amount of data to be transported from one point to another. This is taken to be equivalent to the available bandwidth divided by the size of the unit of data.*
- **Data Transmission Latency** - *This document uses “Transmission Latency” to mean the network delay (based on geographical distance, operation of network equipment etc.) between 2 points. This can be considered equivalent to half of the ping round-trip time.*
- **Disruptive technology** - *A term used in the business world to describe innovations that improve products or services in unexpected ways and change*

both the way things are done and the market. Cloud computing is often referred to as a disruptive technology because it has the potential to completely change the way IT services are procured, deployed, and maintained.

- **Elastic computing** - *The ability to dynamically provision and de-provision processing, memory, and storage resources to meet demands of peak usage without worrying about capacity planning and engineering for peak usage.*
- **Grid computing** - *a form of distributed computing and parallel computing, whereby a 'super and virtual computer' is composed of a cluster of networked, loosely coupled computers acting in concert to perform very large tasks*
- **IaaS - Infrastructure as a service.** *IaaS a basic cloud service model where cloud providers offer computers as physical or more often as virtual machines, raw (blocks) storage, firewalls, load balancers, and networks. IaaS providers supply these resources on demand from their large pools installed in data centers. Local area networks including IP addresses are part of the offer. For the wide area connectivity, the Internet can be used or - in carrier clouds - dedicated virtual private networks can be configured.*
- **Mainframe computer** - *powerful computers used mainly by large organizations for critical applications, typically bulk data processing such as census, industry and consumer statistics, enterprise resource planning, and financial transaction processing.*
- **On-demand service** - *A model that allows a user to purchase cloud services as needed; for instance, if users need to utilize additional servers for the duration of a project, they can do so and then drop back to the previous level after the project is completed.*
- **PaaS (Platform as a service)** - *PaaS is a category of cloud computing services that provide a computing platform and a solution stack as a service. It is a service model of cloud computing. In this model, the consumer creates the software using tools and libraries from the provider. The consumer also controls software deployment and configuration settings. The provider provides the networks, servers and storage.*
- **Peer-to-peer** - *a distributed architecture without the need for central coordination, with participants being at the same time both suppliers and consumers of resources (in contrast to the traditional client-server model).*
- **Public cloud** - *Services offered over the public Internet and available to anyone who wants to purchase the service.*

- **Resilience** - *The ability to prepare for and adapt to changing conditions and withstand and recover rapidly from disruptions. Resilience includes the ability to withstand and recover from deliberate attacks, accidents, or naturally occurring threats or incidents.*
- **Response Time** - *The time taken by an Internet application defined as the time interval between sending the request and receiving a response.*
- **SaaS (Software as a service)** - *SaaS sometimes referred to as on-demand software, is a software delivery model in that have software and associated data centrally hosted on the cloud. SaaS is typically accessed by users using a thin client via a web browser.*
- **Sector-Specific Agency (SSA)** - *Means the Federal department or agency designated under this directive to be responsible for providing institutional knowledge and specialized expertise as well as leading, facilitating, or supporting the security and resilience programs and associated activities of its designated critical infrastructure sector in the all-hazards environment.*
- **Secure and Security** – *These terms refer to reducing the risk to critical infrastructure by physical means or defense cyber measures to intrusions, attacks, or the effects of natural or manmade disasters.*
- **SLA** - *Service level agreement are contractual agreement that defines the level of service, responsibilities, priorities, and guarantees regarding availability, performance, and other aspects of the service provided by the service provider.*
- **Utility computing** - *The packaging of computing resources, such as computation and storage, as a metered service similar to a traditional public utility, such as electricity.*

APPE DIX C. ACRO YMS

- **A SI** American National Standards Institute
- **API** – Application Program Interface
- **AR function** Arrival Rate Function
- **CDO** Cloud Deployment Option
- **CEC** Cloud Environment Constraint
- **CIP** critical infrastructure protection
- **CRM** Customer Relationship Management
- **DHHS** Department of Health and Human Services
- **DHS** Department of Homeland Security
- **FERC** Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
- **FFIEC** Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council
- **FISMA** Federal Information Security Management Act
- **HSPD-7** Homeland Security Presidential Directive 7
- **IaaS** Infrastructure as a Service
- **IEC** International Electro-technical Commission
- **ISA** International Society of Automation
- **ISO** International Organization for Standardization
- **KDM** Knowledge Discovery Meta-Model
- **MWC** Method Workload Characteristic
- **CSD** National Cyber Security Division
- **ERC** North American Electric Reliability Corporation

- **IPP** National Infrastructure Protection Plan
- **IST** National Institute of Standards and Technology
- **RC** Nuclear Regulatory Commission
- **OCR** Office for Civil Rights
- **PaaS** Platform as a Service
- **REST** – Representational State
- **RPC** Remote Procedure Call
- **SCC** sector coordinating council
- **SOA** Service Oriented Architectures
- **QoS** Quality of Service
- **SaaS** Software as a Service
- **VM** Virtual Machine
- **VMM** Virtual Machine Monitor