IJCRT.ORG ISSN : 2320-2882

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Cross Cloud Collaborative Virtual Machine Migration As A Service

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Abstract: This paper aims at the possibility of creation of a VM Migration as a Service (CCCVMMaaS), which supports migration of VM from one CSP to another as well. The CSPs use their preferred and proprietary hypervisor technologies wherein specific features are provided as USPs on the business front. Hence, live migration of VMs across different hypervisors has not been provided even though different Cloud Service Providers (CSP) provide VM Migration tools from on-premise or from within their CDCs to migrate VMs via various options. SDN across CSPs (and/or Multi-Cloud technologies coming into picture here) may help to retain network pool(s) across the CSPs. For the VM Migration, our idea is to have a specially named "VMExportSubnet" and "VMImportSubnet" (hard coded) subnets for an opensource hypervisor in each of the CSPs, out of or into which the VMs will be migrated. This subnet will act as an intermediary and the CSP in question may run automated tools to import/export VMs to or from this hypervisor subnet. Our novel idea will facilitate VM Migrations across CSPs very easily. Currently, for obvious business reasons CSPs do not collaborate. If they do, and just provide intermediary subnets, then VM Migrations can be democratized**.**

Index Terms **- Cloud Computing, Virtual Machine, Service, VMMaaS, Cross Cloud Collaborative, CCCVMMaaS.**

I. INTRODUCTION

The topic belongs to Cloud Computing, Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS). Here we are looking at the various mechanisms by which we may facilitate VM Migrations across different CSPs. There are many dimensions here to consider:

1. Business Collaboration between CSPs:

If this makes sense business wise, or if there is a consortium that can bring up the various CSPs on one common collaborative platform, then CSPs will need to be interconnected. Further, depending on the choice of hypervisor and the Operating System, VM Migrations to or from different CSPs may have different features and hence different costs associated for the exported VMs (going out from a source CSP) or imported (coming into a target CSP).

2. Network Connectivity:

CSPs usually have multiple CDCs in a region, which are interconnected with high speed and high bandwidth data links. One CSP (say Source or VM Exporter CSP, from where we will initiate the migration of a VM) may have their CDC in one physical region while the other CSP (say Target CSP, into which we will terminate the migration of a VM) may not have its CDC in same physical region. However, regardless of the point of presence, the two CDCs of the CSPs will have to be interconnected using high speed WAN links. Only after this connectivity they may now be called Collaborating CSPs.

3. **Choice of Hypervisors:**

Depending on the brand name, there are preferred hypervisors - for example, Hyper-V is from Microsoft, Xen is from Citrix, ESXi from VMWare etc. These hypervisors offer various unique selling points. This difference will remain the unique selling point from the hypervisor player who may be a CSP as well. Or a CSP may select a hypervisor player for the hypervisor related services. The same will be extended to the CSU so that there's a true democracy around which CSP and which hypervisor to host infrastructure on.

4. **Format of the VM Workloads:**

Depending on the choice of hypervisors, the underlying VM may be exported or imported in various supported formats.

5. **Cost of VM or other workloads between CSPs:**

CCCVMMaaS Service will have to be built such that the costs are justifiable. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) around various aspects of Cloud Security, its Ownership need to be looked at as well. Costs for exporting a VM may differ on the basis of VM's format at the source CSP and the target CSP. There might be a need to convert between the different types of VM formats if that is the case.

II. OVERALL PRESENTATION

This is an advanced topic, and we assume that the reader has some knowledge of Cloud Computing, VM Migrations and hypervisors. The reader understands the underlying Virtualization technology that makes it possible to be able to provision infrastructure on-demand, in opex model, and in no time.

In a CSP environment, there are many optimization criteria based on which the provisioned VMs have to be migrated on to different physical hosts. Here, the scenario becomes specific - migration of VM(s) between hosts from different CSPs which are collaborating (connected in the backend using high speed links).

We explore the Cross Cloud Collaboration (CCC) for VM migrations across Clouds from different CSPs. Hence, we propose here that the Source or Exporting CSP may export the VM to a specific Export Subnet with hard-coded name as ***VMExportSubnet*** and the importing CSP may import the VM from a similar construct called ***VMImportSubnet*** . This isolation can help a CSP to apply all its automation tools, policy checks for security related issues or ensuring integrity of the VM, mapping user at the source to the new user at the target etc.

Section III details the related work done by previous researchers. After studying the same, come to identify the gaps in the research work. This is documented under section IV. The connection required is covered in section V on Connectivity Options. The other details of VM Migration after these subnets are set up, and which is our primary study, are provided in section VI. We then summarize and conclude our study in our Conclusion section.

III. RELATED WORK

Overview of related work in the field of Cross Cloud Collaborative Virtual Machine Migration as a Service (CCCVMMaaS) based on recent trends and advancements in research and industry. Here are some key areas of related work from papers published in 2022 and 2023:

1. **Survey and Review Papers:** Recent papers often include comprehensive surveys and reviews of existing approaches, techniques, and challenges in CCCVMMaaS. These papers provide valuable insights into the current state-of-the-art, emerging trends, and future directions in the field.
2. **Experimental Studies and Evaluations:** Researchers often conduct experimental studies and evaluations to assess the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of CCCVMMaaS solutions. These studies typically involve the design of experiments, benchmarking methodologies, and performance evaluations using real- world datasets or simulation environments.
3. **Framework and Architecture Proposals:** Many papers propose novel frameworks, architectures, and methodologies for CCCVMMaaS. These proposals aim to address specific challenges such as interoperability, scalability, security, and performance optimization in cross-cloud virtual machine migration.
4. **Security and Privacy Enhancements:** Given the importance of security and privacy in CCCVMMaaS, several papers focus on enhancing security mechanisms, encryption techniques, access control policies, and compliance standards to ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of data during migration.

5. **Machine Learning and AI Integration:** Recent advancements in machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) have led to the integration of intelligent techniques into CCCVMMaaS solutions. Papers explore the use of machine learning algorithms for predictive analytics, anomaly detection, and optimization in virtual machine migration processes.
6. **Standardization and Interoperability Efforts:** Standardization bodies, industry consortia, and research communities collaborate to establish common standards, protocols, and best practices for CCCVMMaaS. Papers discuss standardization efforts and interoperability frame- works to promote seamless migration across heterogeneous cloud environments.
7. **Case Studies and Practical Implementations:** Real-world case studies and practical implementations of CCCVMMaaS solutions provide insights into their adoption, deployment challenges, and performance in various industry sectors and organizational contexts. These papers offer valuable lessons learned and best practices for future implementations.

By reviewing papers published in 2022 and 2023 in these areas, researchers can gain a comprehensive understanding of the latest developments, challenges, and opportunities in the field of CCCVMMaaS and identify promising avenues for future research and innovation.

IV. RESEARCH GAP

Following gaps were identified:

1. Most articles referred to VM migration in context of migrating VMs across CDCs only of one CSP. Migration of VMs across different CSPs is not discussed (as collaboration of CSPs doesn't seem to be business wise viable).
2. CDCs of a given ISP are well connected without many internal security restrictions. Interconnection of CDCs collaborating CSPs has not been discussed.
3. Tools used for various migration and optimization scenarios across different CSPs having different internal implementations with respect to the choice of hypervisor, for example, have not been discussed.

V. CONNECTIVITY OPTIONS

True Cloud Computing does not exist in its super true form as long as there are CSPs having monopolized hypervisors and monopolized services. There's therefore vendor lock-in to a CSP on business front and there are therefore associated customer pains too wherein the CSU must perform all workload migrations by himself.

Authors [1] have explained their concept of CIC (Composed Image Cloning) and explained how VM migration may happen across federated cloud environment, that means across CSPs.

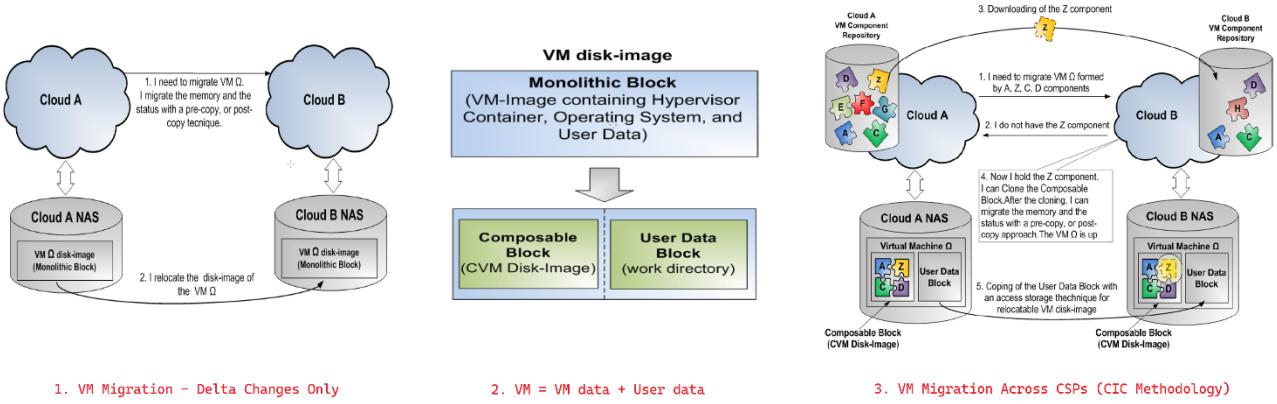

Fig. 1. VM Migration (Across CSPs) - CIC Approach [1]

Figure 1 shows VM Migration (Across CSPs) - CIC Approach. This approach has the benefit that the OS related data need not be transferred and just the user data may be transferred. However, the downside here is that the settings required for specific software installed reside in the OS level configuration files have to be created somehow and the OS needs to register the installed software as available. Just copying the data may not work or finding out which files went in which directories may not be known in advance. Tracking those files is tedious. One may argue that a composable image may be pulled for a specific software but when there are multiple software installed, it's just next to impossible to match every dependency and version of the software in question.

This CIC approach in today's state of affairs is very much similar to or may be the idea behind dockers and containers wherein dockers represent a composable image and on top of that containers contain user data or application data or applications which may be run.

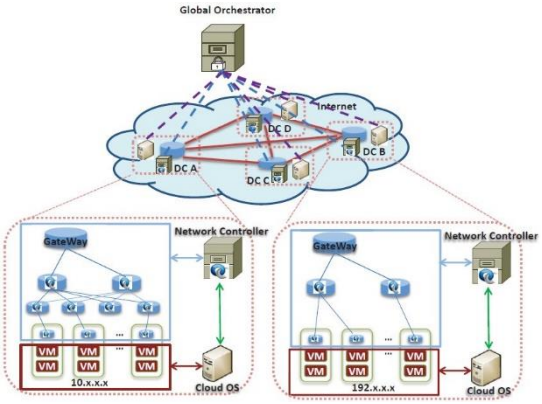

Fig. 2. VM Migration (Across CSPs) - SDN Approach 1 [2]

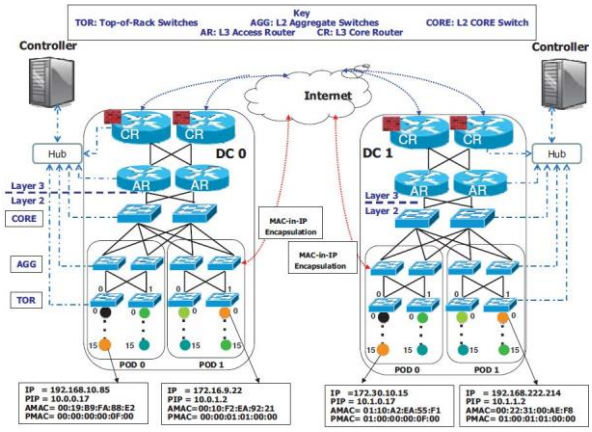

Fig. 3. VM Migration (Across CSPs) - SDN Approach 2 [3]

Bandwidth availability back in the times the paper was written about was very low, but these days network speed and available bandwidth is not a big deal. We might simply transfer the entire image and be done with in a matter of minutes.

This section explains our novel approach about how we may have VM workloads migrated across two CSPs and how true cloud computing can be achieved if CCCVMMaaS can be made a possible reality. With the latest in multi- cloud and inter-cloud connectivity, it is of course, doable with collaboration will from existing CSPs or another day an independent CSP will come up with such a service.

Other approach could be the use of SDN and OpenFlow as explained by Authors [2] (Refer Figure 2) and [3] (Refer Figure 3).

Another option these days, is to use a multi-cloud partner for the connectivity part. Even though the bigger CSP players already have their own preferred hypervisors and their own tools and connectivity mechanisms in the backend, independent use of proven tools and services from a multi-cloud technology company (Aviatrix, for example) could be a good idea. The connectivity between different CSPs is then provided as a service by the multi-cloud company. After the connectivity is setup, the VM Migrations may be initiated as proposed in section V.

VI. VM MIGRATION AS A SERVICE

From a business perspective, VM Migration away from a CSP is seen as a revenue loss and this is also why such a service is not offered in practice. Today, any CSP leaves this pain to the CSU to migrate workloads manually, if at all for any reason a CSU must leave and move to a different provider. In a way, this is not in line with the democratic right of a CSU to be able to make dynamic choice of a CSP. However, in the near future, and in a collaborating world, there could be workloads moving across CSPs. A CSP needs to embrace the fact that it would eventually be both ways. VMs would be going out from a given CSP but coming in as well from another competing CSP. If a CSP is confident of its services and is meeting SLAs and QoS, then why not offer VM Migration as a Service, on the lines of - "If my customer, you are not satisfied, we provide you CCCVMMaaS so that you may choose to move away to any other CSP of your choice!"

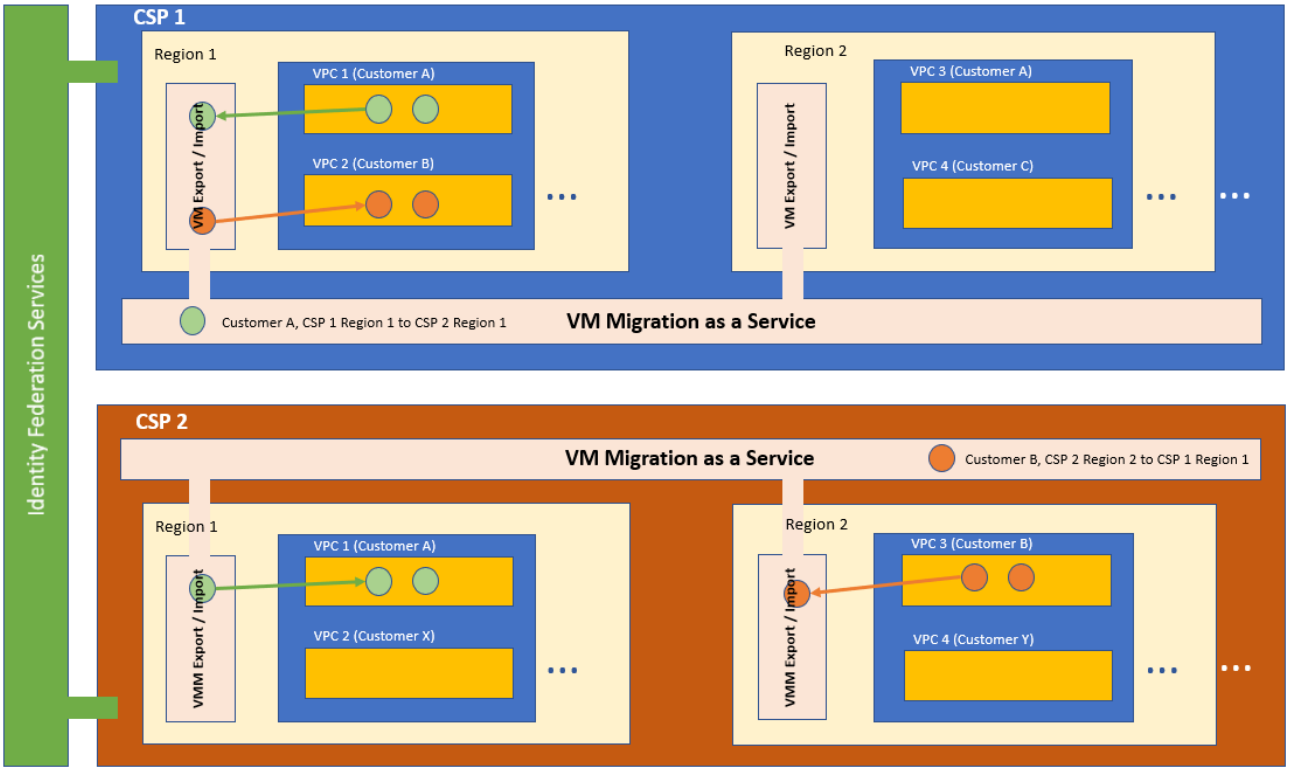

Fig. 4. VM Migration as a Service (Across CSPs)

We have studied various papers on cross cloud collaborative VM migration approaches which include the work done by the authors [4], [5], [6], [7], [8] and [9]. The survey paper from authors [10] and review papers from authors [11] and [12] are an excellent read. The intercloud paper by authors [13] has also provided meaningful insights. We therefore understand what we want to do clearly.

In our proposal, VM Migration may happen in two broad scenarios - across CSPs that means from one CSP's cloud to another CSP's cloud and other one is from On-Premise DC to a CSP cloud.

1. VM Migration Across CSPs:

Two CSPs are involved here that collaborate to ensure that they have identical components at each end to send/receive VMs across each other's cloud environment. Figure 4 shows VM Migration as a Service wherein a CSU, customer A from CSP1 having a VM in Region 1 is shown migrating to Region 1 of CSP 2. Also, another CSU, customer B is shown to migrate his VM from Region 2 of CSP 2 to Region 1 of CSP 1.

Figure 5 shows VM Migration as a Service wherein a CSU, customer A, having On-Premise DCs at Location 1 and Location 2 is shown migrating to Region 1 of CSP 1.

The components of the proposed idea are as follows:

a) VM Migration as a Service:

This layer ensures that the parallel terminologies across CSPs are mapped properly. The regions, availability zones, subnets, security groups etc. all have to be mapped from source CSP to corresponding constructs at the destination CSP. The destination format at the source CSP to export a VM to will be an open supported VM format. Similarly, the source format to export from at the destination CSP will also be the same open format. There could be one or more supported Open formats by a CSP. This arrangement is because currently the CSPs have their native hyper- visors for business reasons.

b) Choice of Hypervisor:

With more freedom to CSU, he may be able to choose a hypervisor of his choice. There could just be the open formats across all CSPs or the interfaces will provide for selecting which hypervisor to move to. Also, to promote no favorites and by virtue of competition these hypervisors will then be free of any extra or vendor specific charges. This would then be a very big advantage for the CSUs. There won't be any CSP vendor lock-in. True virtualization will come into play then and true cloud computing will be realized in action.

c) Certified Secure Image:

The exporting CSP will certify its exported VM as a certified secure image. This will form the basis of ensuring security of the VM Image itself. Under CCCVMMaaS, this becomes acceptance criteria given that security at the hypervisor or VM Image level rests with the CSP. A certified image also guarantees that the importing CSP can safely import the workload into its cloud. This may be followed by conversion to native hypervisor supported by the destined CSP.

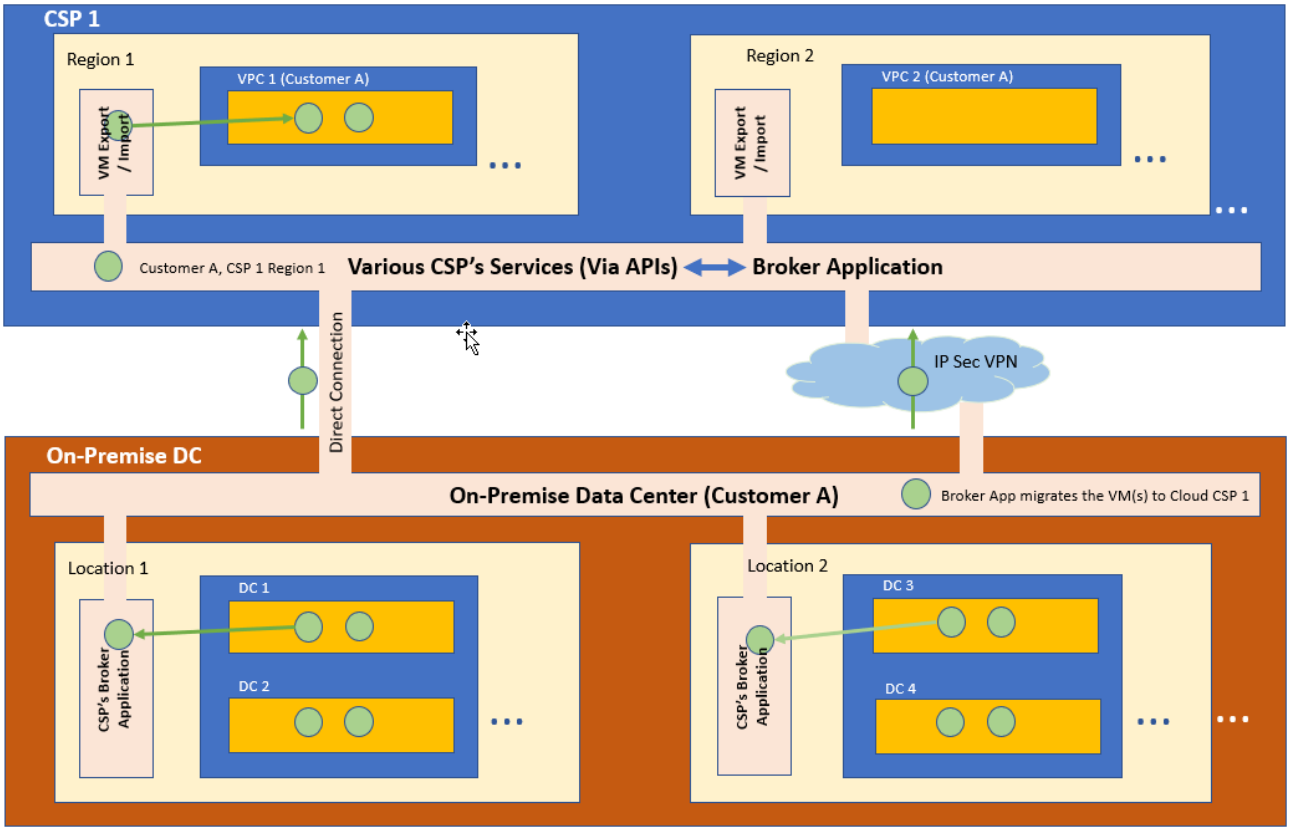

Fig. 5. VM Migration as a Service (On-Premise to CSP)

d) VM Export/Import Service:

This service within a region, ensures that the VMs native to a preferred hypervisor of a given CSP are exported to an open format along with other associated properties (meta data) of the VM. This is like an exchange that takes care of all dependencies of a VM's underlying hypervisor format and dependencies.

Export and Import could be two separate isolated and secure networks. VM Export Network only exports the certified secure image out to be eventually moved to On-Premise DC or to another competent CSP. Similarly, VM Import Network accepts certified secure image only from other competent CSP. The CSP may then apply its own set of security checks and perform operations to ensure the sanity of the VM image.

e) Identity Federation Service:

This service ensures that the CSU is indeed whom he claims to be. Across CSPs, a federated service for IAM (Identity and Access Management) is required to ensure that the VMs being migrated are migrated via a proper flow control for a given CSU.

Initially, this CCCVMMaaS may be started as a Cold Migration under the VM Export/Import Service. Then, with more bandwidth and collaboration among CSPs, it could be possible to perform Hot Migration as well. Behind the scene conversions (of VM formats), mappings (of user sessions and networks) and movement of data (memory data and storage data) could be clearly envisioned.

2. VM Migration from On-Premises DC to a CSP:

This is an established use case as the CSPs treat mi- grating workloads as a way of increasing their share of on-board customers and eventually their revenue. Sometimes these utilities are provided to facilitate simple lifting and shifting of the VMs from On-Premises DC to a CSP's cloud at no cost at all.

The components of the VM migration service in this case are as follows:

a) Network Connectivity (CSP and On-Premise DC):

A direct connection to Cloud (for example AWS's Direct Connect) or an IP Sec VPN over the Internet is the secure and speedy connection that is required. Authors [2] and [3] have discussed SDN based VM migration across CDCs using OpenFlow.

b) A Broker Application in On-Premise DC:

A broker application which can talk to the supported hypervisors is installed at the customer side. This application can also talk to CSP's service constructs via APIs. Once the application can connect to the VM Manager application and fetch the configurations and data, provisioning VMs of similar configuration and migrating the contents of the VM can be easily done by the broker application. It is just a matter of time

depending on the amount of data to be transferred and the capacity of the network link. Soon after that, the VM at customer's end may be shut down and the VM at CSP's cloud may take-over to operational status.

This service is already available in the form of different tools (brokering applications) released by CSPs which successfully migrate the VM workloads to their respective clouds. Many competent partners of the CSPs that resell their services, do provide migration services free of cost or at an agreed cost per VM by function or by the total data size involved in the migration exercise.

VII. CONTRIBUTION

CSPs often provide unique selling propositions and therefore for business reasons do not seem to collaborate. If they do, VM which is a common denominator for anything workable on the infrastructure front, may be moved across clouds from different providers and workloads may be provisioned in a cloud agnostic way taking strategic advantages ahead.

Following are our contributions:

1. We have extensively studied and proposed another CCCVMaaS idea. Our idea is to use a hard-coded subnet name for this purpose. This is akin to the idea of implementation of a firewall in Microsoft Azure cloud wherein AzureFirewallSubnet is the name of the subnet within which Azure Firewall is deployed. In this subnet all CSPs shall deploy compatible opensource hypervisor, for example, KVM that supports almost all types of formats of VMs to import from or to export to.
2. We have touched upon the democratization aspect of the VM migration which may be possible by CSPs collaborating among themselves. Unfortunatley, this doesn't happen for business reasons.

VIII. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Advantages and disadvantages of Cross Cloud Collaborative Virtual Machine Migration as a Service (CCCVMMaaS):

1. **Advantages:**

*a) **Flexibility:***

CCCVMMaaS enables organizations to migrate virtual machines (VMs) across multiple cloud platforms seamlessly. This flexibility allows organizations to leverage different cloud providers based on their specific requirements, cost considerations, and geographical locations.

*b) **Resource Optimization:***

CCCVMMaaS facilitates efficient resource utilization by enabling organizations to dynamically allocate computing resources, storage capacity, and network bandwidth across different cloud environments. This optimization helps organizations minimize costs and maximize performance during VM migration.

*c) **Scalability:***

CCCVMMaaS scales seamlessly to handle large-scale VM migration tasks and accommodate evolving work- load demands in dynamic cloud environments. This scalability ensures that organizations can migrate VMs efficiently, regardless of the size or complexity of their infrastructure.

*d) **Reduced Downtime:***

CCCVMMaaS minimizes downtime during VM migration by leveraging collaborative techniques, live migration capabilities, and intelligent workload scheduling. This reduces disruptions to business operations and ensures continuous availability of services during migration.

*e) **Enhanced Security:***

CCCVMMaaS prioritizes security by implementing robust encryption, access control mechanisms, and compliance standards during the migration process. This ensures the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of data throughout the migration lifecycle, mitigating security risks associated with data exposure or unauthorized access.

2. **Disadvantages:**

*a) **Complexity:***

CCCVMMaaS introduces complexity due to the need to support interoperability between different cloud platforms, manage heterogeneous environments, and ensure compatibility with existing infrastructure. This complexity may require specialized expertise and resources to implement and maintain CCCVMMaaS solutions effectively.

*b) **Performance Overhead:***

CCCVMMaaS may incur performance overhead during VM migration, including increased latency, net- work bandwidth consumption, and resource contention. These performance issues can impact application performance and user experience, particularly for latency- sensitive or mission-critical workloads.

c) Integration Challenges:

Integrating CCCVMMaaS with existing IT systems, management tools, and security frameworks may pose challenges due to differences in APIs, protocols, and management interfaces across different cloud plat- forms. This integration complexity can impede the adoption and deployment of CCCVMMaaS solutions.

Despite these challenges, CCCVMMaaS offers significant benefits in terms of flexibility, resource optimization, scalability, reduced downtime, and enhanced security, making it a valuable approach for organizations seeking to migrate VMs across heterogeneous cloud environments. However, organizations must carefully evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of CCCVMMaaS and address potential challenges to realize its full potential effectively

IX. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Cross Cloud Collaborative Virtual Machine Migration as a Service (CCCVMMaaS) offers a promising solution to the challenges associated with virtual machine migration across diverse cloud environments. Throughout this study, we have explored various aspects of CCCVMMaaS, including its benefits, challenges, and potential applications.

Key findings from this research include:

1. **Flexibility and Interoperability:**

CCCVMMaaS enables organizations to migrate virtual machines seamlessly across different cloud platforms, facilitating flexibility and interoperability in multi-cloud environments. This capability allows organizations to leverage the strengths of various cloud providers while avoiding vendor lock-in.

2. **Efficiency and Resource Optimization:**

By leveraging collaborative techniques and automation, CCCVMMaaS enhances the efficiency of virtual machine migration processes. It enables organizations to optimize resource utilization, minimize downtime, and reduce operational costs associated with migration activities.

3. **Security and Compliance:**

CCCVMMaaS prioritizes security and compliance by implementing robust encryption, access control mechanisms, and compliance standards during the migration process. This ensures the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of data throughout the migration lifecycle.

4. **Scalability and Performance:**

CCCVMMaaS is designed to scale seamlessly to handle large-scale migration tasks and accommodate evolving workload demands in dynamic cloud environments. It offers performance optimization features to ensure efficient migration operations even under heavy workloads.

X. FUTURE WORK

Despite the advancements in CCCVMMaaS, several avenues for future research and development exist:

1. **Enhanced Security Mechanisms:**

Future research can focus on enhancing security mechanisms for CCCVMMaaS, including the development of novel encryption techniques, access control mechanisms, and threat detection algorithms to mitigate security risks.

2. **Optimization Algorithms:**

There is a need for the development of advanced optimization algorithms for CCCVMMaaS to improve resource allocation, minimize migration time, and reduce downtime during virtual ma- chine migration.

3. **Real-time Monitoring and Analytics:**

In future, some more work can explore the integration of real-time monitoring and analytics capabilities into CCCVMMaaS to provide actionable insights, performance metrics, and predictive analytics for efficient migration planning and execution.

In conclusion, CCCVMMaaS holds significant potential to revolutionize VM migration in multi-cloud environments. Continued research and innovation in this domain are essential to address emerging challenges, enhance capabilities, and unlock new opportunities for organizations adopting cloud technologies.

XI. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This work is fully funded by XOR Bit Infotech Pvt. Ltd., Bhosari, Maharashtra, India. We extend our thanks to the management for being supportive and guiding in our endeavor.

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