American Journal of Innovation in Science and Engineering (AJISE)

ISSN: 2158-7205 (ONLINE)

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 2 (2026)

PUBLISHED BY
E-PALLI PUBLISHERS, DELAWARE, USA

American Journal of Innovation in Science and Engineering (AJISE)

Volume 5 Issue 2, Year 2026
ISSN: 2158-7205 (Online)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.54536/ajise.v5i2.8248
https://journals.e-palli.com/home/index.php/ajise

Secure Cloud-Native Platforms for Critical Service Continuity: An AI-Driven Framework for National Cyber and Economic Resilience

Jawad Yaqoob Mir[1*], Fawad Mir[1]

Article Information

Received: May 12, 2026
Accepted: July 21, 2026
Published: August 25, 2026

Keywords

Artificial Intelligence, Cloud-Native Platforms, Critical Infrastructure, Cyber Resilience, Economic Resilience

ABSTRACT

The growing dependence of governments, financial institutions, healthcare organizations, energy providers, transportation networks, and communication systems on "cloud-native" platforms has made it more important than ever that these digital services be delivered continuously and securely. Cloud-native architectures offer scalability, flexibility, and quick deployment using microservices, containers, orchestration, and DevSecOps practices, but they also present complex cybersecurity, operational, and supply chain threats to the country's critical infrastructure and economic well-being. The existing research focuses on cloud resilience, artificial intelligence for IT operations (AIOps), cybersecurity or governance individually, causing approaches to be disjointed and suboptimal for critical service continuity during large-scale cyber incidents. In this research, the authors introduce the AI-powered Integrated Cyber-Economic Resilience (AICER) Framework, which is a conceptual framework that integrates cloud-native infrastructure, cybersecurity intelligence, AI-assisted operational analytics, secure software delivery, economic impact assessment, and governance into a comprehensive decision-support architecture. The framework is formulated on the basis of Design Science Research Methodology (DSRM) and supported by an integrative literature review encompassing the most recent literature, international cybersecurity standards, and cloud computing best practices. The proposed framework does not introduce new performance metrics but rather builds on existing metrics, such as Service Level Objectives (SLOs), availability and reliability metrics, Mean Time Between Failures (MTBF), Mean Time to Recovery (MTTR), DORA software delivery metrics, Common Vulnerability Scoring System (CVSS), Exploit Prediction Scoring System (EPSS), Software Levels for Supply Chain Security (SLSA), and NIST Cybersecurity Framework (CSF 2.0) and NIST AI Risk Management Framework (AI RMF). The framework also takes economic impact into account to inform decisions on recovery for nationally significant services. The proposed architecture provides a vision for a policy-aware and AI-driven approach to enhancing cyber resilience, bolstering critical infrastructure, and fortifying continuity of essential digital services. The study provides a strong foundation for further prototype implementation, experimental validation, and deployment in public and private critical sectors.

INTRODUCTION

The digitalisation of modern societies is taking place at an unprecedented pace and has revolutionised the provision of essential services in healthcare, finance, energy, transportation, telecommunications, manufacturing and public administration. These industries have come to rely on cloud-based technologies to deliver scalable, reliable and always available digital services. The security, resilience, and continuity of cloud-native organizations are now a national priority, with service disruptions causing cascading operational failures, economic losses, and societal consequences (National Institute of Standards and Technology [NIST], 2024). The cloud-native paradigm of software development, where software is built to be scalable, elastic, portable, and deployable in applications in a rapid manner, is the dominant paradigm these days, thanks to microservices, containers, Kubernetes orchestration, serverless computing and DevSecOps practices (Burns *et al.,* 2016). These technologies enable continuous integration and continuous deployment (CI/CD), which enable organisations to deliver software more efficiently and provide greater operational flexibility. But there are also new problems with the distributed nature of cloud-native systems. Applications are now made up of lots of interconnected services deployed across hybrid and multi-cloud, with dependency complexity becoming a problem and systems more susceptible to cascading failures, configuration mistakes, software bugs, outages, software supply chain compromises and advanced cyberattacks. Cyber-physical systems are the foundation of many critical infrastructures since they combine computational procedures, physical equipment, and communication systems into a closely-knit system (S. Singh *et al.,* 2025). Cloud-based infrastructures are now clearly proven to be strategic targets of cyber attacks on national security and economic stability. Examples of ransomware attacks against healthcare organizations, damage to financial services and software supply chain compromises like SolarWinds and Log4Shell show how weaknesses in trusted software components can impact thousands of organizations at once. These incidents are indicators that for critical service continuity, resilience

[1] Master of Science in Information Technology, Washington University of Science and Technology (WUST), Alexandria, Virginia, USA
[*] Corresponding author's e-mail: jawadmir488@gmail.com

strategies must go beyond just infrastructure availability, encompassing software integrity, the continuous monitoring of systems for security threats, and a secure software delivery process throughout the software life cycle (NIST, 2024). Artificial Intelligence for IT Operations (AIOps) is an important enabler of cloud resilience with Artificial Intelligence (AI). AI technology like machine learning, anomaly detection, predictive analytics and automated reasoning can help organizations analyze vast amounts of operational telemetry data, spot abnormal behavior, anticipate failure and aid in root cause analysis. This means that AI-powered operations can minimize downtime, streamline incident resolution, and bolster service reliability. But AI-driven operational decisions can also pose explainability, model drift, transparency, and governance issues. Thus, in mission-critical settings, AI should not be used as a standalone controller but as a tool to support decision-making, ensuring that automated suggestions are consistent with organizational policies and human oversight (NIST, 2023). Meanwhile, software supply chain security is a critical part of cyber resilience. Today's cloud-native applications rely more and more on open source libraries, third party packages, container images and automated deployment pipelines. This means that weaknesses can exist in the software architecture or implementation process, and only become apparent when production systems are attacked. There are also international efforts to ensure software integrity and provenance throughout the software lifecycle, for instance, the NIST Secure Software Development Framework (SSDF), Software Levels for Supply Chain Security (SLSA), Software Bill of Materials (SBOM), and Zero Trust Architecture. However, these software assurance practices are typically handled separately from operational resilience platforms and that means organizations can't correlate runtime behavior with software trustworthiness. The resilience of cloud-native platforms is not just a technical matter, but has also become a key component in the stability of the national economy. Financial, health care, energy, transportation, or government service disruptions can have ripple effects that go far beyond the organization that was impacted. Therefore, resilience should not be judged based on technology metrics alone (e.g., availability or recovery time), but should incorporate business continuity, service criticality, regulatory requirements and economic impact. While there have been great advances in cloud-native computing, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, DevSecOps, and software assurance, research is still disjointed. Most studies focus on a particular aspect of infrastructure resilience, cybersecurity using AI, software supply chain security, or governance; there is limited coverage spanning across all of these areas. As a result, organizations often don't have a single framework to correlate operational telemetry, cyber threat intelligence, software provenance, governance policies and economic impact together to enable coordinated decision making in the event of a cyber incident. To fill this research void, this study introduces the AI-driven Integrated Cyber-Economic Resilience (AICER) Framework, which is a conceptual architecture to build resilient secure cloud-native platforms for national critical services. The framework is developed based on the Design Science Research Methodology (DSRM) and brings together a unified decision-support architecture of cloud-native infrastructure, cybersecurity intelligence, AI-assisted operational analytics, secure software delivery, software supply chain assurance, governance, and economic resilience. The framework does not introduce new resilience metrics, but instead builds on internationally recognized standards and metrics such as Service Level Objectives (SLOs), Mean Time Between Failures (MTBF), Mean Time to Recovery (MTTR), DORA software delivery metrics, the Common Vulnerability Scoring System (CVSS), the Exploit Prediction Scoring System (EPSS), the NIST Cybersecurity Framework (CSF 2.0), the NIST Secure Software Development Framework (SSDF), the NIST AI Risk Management Framework (AI RMF), and Software Levels for Supply Chain Security (SLSA). These standards are embedded in a policy-aware architecture that has explainable AI, secure software delivery, intelligent operational resilience and coordinated incident response capabilities while maintaining human oversight for high impact decisions. The contributions of this study are four-fold. First, it suggests a single conceptual framework to bind together cloud-native resilience, cybersecurity intelligence, AI-powered operational analytics, software supply chain assurance, governance, and economic resilience to ensure continuity of critical services. Second, it also provides a policy-aware governance model, separating AI-assisted recommendations from deterministic security controls and human decision authority. Thirdly, it illustrates the synergy between internationally accepted standards for cybersecurity and software engineering in a comprehensive decision-support architecture for cloud-native critical infrastructure. Finally, the study provides a theoretical framework for the implementation, empirical validation and practical application of a future prototype in public and private organizations tasked with protecting national cyber and economic resilience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cloud-Native Computing and Critical Digital Infrastructure

Cloud-native computing has revolutionized how modern digital infrastructures are designed, deployed and operated, allowing organizations to create scalable, resilient, and continuously evolving software systems. Cloud-native systems, in contrast to monolithic architectures, leverage microservices, containerization, orchestration platforms, service meshes, and automated deployment pipelines for increased agility, scalability, and efficiency in operations. The use of technologies like Kubernetes, Docker, serverless computing, and Infrastructure as Code (IaC) have helped organizations

deploy applications quickly and provide high availability in distributed computing environments (Burns *et al.,* 2016). As a result, cloud-native platforms have become the technology bedrock of digital transformation projects in healthcare, banking, telecommunications, transportation, manufacturing, education and public administration. Certain research works describe the design and evaluation of an Autonomous Threat Intelligence Aggregation and Decision Infrastructure (Zubair *et al.,* 2023) that will be useful for enhancing the national cyber defense preparedness through automated manner, intelligence integration, and a contextual decision-making process. With the shift to cloud-native platforms, they have become even more critical to national critical infrastructures. No longer confined to data storage or computational resources, critical digital services are now used for financial transactions, emergency response systems, electronic healthcare records, smart energy grids, transportation management and government services. These services are becoming more and more interdependent, and failures in cloud-native infrastructures can quickly spread across several industries, causing disturbance in operations and significant economic impacts. Digital resilience should thus be viewed as a national capability and not just an organizational goal, and must always be able to deliver services even when hit with cyberattacks, software failures, infrastructure outages or sudden workload increases (NIST, 2024). Cloud-native architectures offer a number of technical benefits when it comes to enhancing system resilience. Independent microservices enable organisations to compartmentalise failures, make changes to individual microservices without impacting on the entire application, and scale individual microservices based on workload. Container orchestration platforms automatically replace failed instances, balance workloads and optimize resource utilization. In addition, service meshes enhance the reliability of communication via traffic management, retry logic, circuit breakers and fault isolation. These capabilities increase a lot the operational flexibility and enable a continuous software evolution. Even with those benefits, cloud-native platforms impose a lot of complexity by being distributed. Today's applications can be comprised of hundreds of interrelated services that talk to one another over hybrid and multi-cloud environments. An individual user request can go through several application programming interfaces (APIs), authentication systems, databases, messaging queues, third-party services and external cloud providers until a response is returned. This dependency chain makes cascading failures more likely as failure in one service cascades to other dependent applications. Therefore, cloud-native resilience is not about infrastructure redundancy alone, but also about managing service dependencies, distributing workloads, maintaining observability, enabling automated recovery and making intelligent operational decisions. The AI decisions were made using reinforcement learning and an X-DQN model, which gave explanations as to why each decision was made (K M Zubair *et al.,* 2025). Traditional infrastructure monitoring methods are no longer sufficient to handle the challenges thrown up by managing a highly dynamic environment like cloud-native. Static threshold-based monitoring often results in a "fire drill mentality" during spikes and troughs in workload, and it also doesn't detect the intricate relationships between distributed services. Recent studies thus recommend an observability-centric approach to operational management, combining metrics, logs, traces, events, and dependency graphs to deliver a full picture of the situation in cloud-native ecosystems. Multidimensional telemetry sources provide operators with insight into not just system failures, but also into the underlying relationships that are causing service degradation, which helps to recover more quickly and diagnose problems faster.

Cloud-Native Security, Devsecops, and Software Supply Chain Assurance

Cloud native technologies increase operational agility but also increase the attack surface for cyber security. Cloud-native applications are constantly assembled from open-source software packages, container images, third-party libraries, APIs, infrastructure templates and automated deployment pipelines. Thus, software integrity is not only about application code but all the elements along the software development lifecycle. DevSecOps has become a strategy to incorporate security into the software development process, not just as a step performed at deployment. DevSecOps integrates automated security testing into the software development lifecycle (SDLC), decreasing the expense of remediation and the risk of deployment, and identifying vulnerabilities during software development. Static application security testing (SAST), dynamic application security testing (DAST), software composition analysis (SCA), container vulnerability scanning, secrets detection, and Infrastructure-as-Code validation are all critical security tools in the modern secure software delivery toolchain. In recent years, software supply chain security has also been brought to the forefront by a number of cyber events. As seen with the SolarWinds compromise, the bad guys can infiltrate thousands of organizations through trusted software updates, and as we've seen with Log4Shell, a single open-source component can expose millions of software systems around the world. These incidents demonstrate that secure software delivery must not only guarantee correctness of applications, but also the provenance, integrity, authenticity, and ongoing vulnerability management of software during deployment and operation. In order to improve software assurance, several frameworks recognized internationally have been developed. The NIST Secure Software Development Framework (SSDF) offers guidance to incorporate secure software development practices across the software development lifecycle; and Software Levels for Supply Chain Security (SLSA) define incremental levels of security assurance for

software provenance, build integrity and verification of software artifacts. By the same measure, Software Bills of Materials (SBOMs) enhance transparency of software by listing software components and dependencies, making it easy for organizations to quickly find and identify vulnerable software components after the discovery of vulnerabilities. Together, these mechanisms increase the trustworthiness of software by enhancing software provenance and mitigating risks in software supply chains (NIST, 2024). However, current software assurance methods often exist as standalone methods and are not integrated with operational monitoring systems. Security teams assess software artifacts before deployment, while Site Reliability Engineering (SRE) teams assess software artifacts during runtime for availability, latency, throughput and service recovery. This separation in organisations often means that security information is not used in operational decisions. As such, production systems can run even if software supply chain violations occur, and operational failures can be investigated without taking software provenance or integrity of software deployment into account. The software assurance and cloud native operational resilience are therefore important research challenges.

Table 1: Comparison of Existing Literature

Study Area	Major Contributions	Limitations	Research Gap Addressed by AICER
Cloud-native computing	Scalability, elasticity, microservices, Kubernetes, orchestration	Limited integration with cybersecurity governance	Integrates cloud operations with cyber resilience
DevSecOps	Secure CI/CD, automated security testing	Primarily focuses on software development lifecycle	Extends security into runtime resilience and service continuity
Software Supply Chain Security	SBOM, SLSA, artifact provenance, secure software delivery	Limited connection with operational intelligence	Correlates software assurance with runtime cloud operations
Cloud Observability	Metrics, logs, traces, distributed monitoring	Reactive rather than predictive	AI-assisted predictive resilience and dependency analysis
Site Reliability Engineering (SRE)	Reliability engineering, SLOs, error budgets	Limited cyber threat awareness	Integrates cyber risk with operational reliability
Existing Frameworks	Individual security or resilience frameworks	Fragmented across technical domains	Unified cyber-economic resilience architecture

This sets the backdrop for the literature review, which shows how cloud-native computing, secure software delivery and software supply chain assurance has evolved, and how there is a need for an integrated framework. The subsequent sections would then merge AI in cybersecurity, AIOps, national cyber resilience and economic resilience, AI governance, and finally, an extensive research gap that would lead to the proposed AICER Framework.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study takes the Design Science Research Methodology (DSRM) approach to design a conceptual framework which can be used to improve security, resilience, and continuity of cloud-native platforms of critical national services. Research paradigm Design Science Research (DSR) is regarded as suitable research paradigm for solving complex problems in the organizational and technological field by developing the novel artifacts such as conceptual models, frameworks, methods and systems architectures (Peffers *et al.,* 2007; Hevner *et al.,* 2004). Whereas empirical studies are mainly aimed at understanding phenomena, DSR aims at the design and evaluation of an artifact that is meaningful and useful in solving a problem and also in generating knowledge. The rationale for choosing DSRM is the fact that there is a lack of a cohesive body of work on cloud-native resilience, artificial intelligence (AI), cybersecurity, software supply chain security, and economic resilience in general. While there have been significant strides in each of these research areas, few studies have suggested a comprehensive approach that can support both secure operation of cloud-based systems and AI-enabled decision support, cyber threat intelligence, governance, software assurance, and national critical service continuity. Thus, the main objective of this study is the development of AI-driven Integrated Cyber-Economic Resilience (AICER) Framework which will be used as the major design artifact. This is a conceptual study, as opposed to an experimental one where a prototype needs to be implemented and quantitatively validated. Hence, the approach to evaluating the strategy is an ex-ante design evaluation based on theoretical completeness, internal consistency, standards alignment, practical applicability, governance support, and implementation feasibility (Venable *et al.,* 2016). This is a suitable method as the goal of the research is to provide a theoretically justifiable architecture to inform the design of future prototypes and empirical testing, and not to guarantee performance benefits.

Research Design

The overall research process follows the six activities of the Design Science Research Methodology proposed by Peffers *et al.* (2007), namely: Problem Identification and Motivation, Define the Objectives for a Solution, Design and Development, Demonstration, Evaluation and lastly Communication.

The study starts with the observation that the nation's

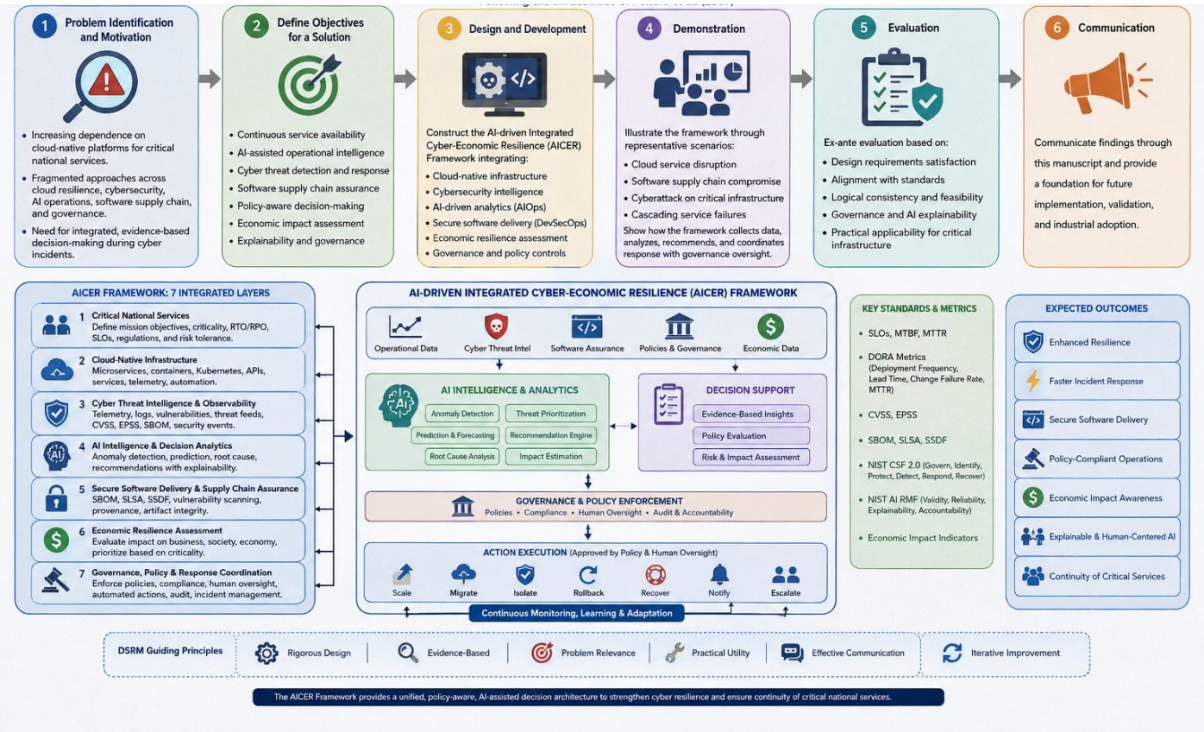

Figure 1: Conceptual Research Design of the Design Science Research Methodology (DSRM)

critical infrastructures are becoming more and more reliant on cloud-native platforms, and the cybersecurity risks are escalating rapidly with distributed software ecosystems. The literature reveals that the four areas of operational resilience, software supply chain security, AI-assisted operations, and governance mechanisms are mostly studied individually and that the decision-making process in cyber incidents is fragmented. This fragmentation gives rise to the need for a cohesive framework that can enable secure and resilient continuity of cloud-native services. The second stage is to convert this set of challenges into a set of functional and non-functional design objectives. The objectives are based on literature review and internationally recognized cyber security standards. The framework is supposed to enable non-stop service availability, AI-supported operational intelligence, software supply chain assurance, cyber threat detection, policy-aware decision making, economic impact assessment, explainability and governance. The design and development stage builds the proposed AICER Framework, which is a conceptual security design that includes cloud-native infrastructure, cybersecurity intelligence, AI-powered analytics, secure software delivery, economic resilience analysis, and governance mechanisms. Instead of new algorithms or arbitrary performance metrics, the framework references existing standards and metrics such as Service Level Objectives (SLOs), Mean Time Between Failures (MTBF), Mean Time to Recovery (MTTR), Common Vulnerability Scoring System (CVSS), Exploit Prediction Scoring System (EPSS), Software Levels for Supply Chain Security (SLSA), NIST Secure Software Development Framework (SSDF), NIST Cybersecurity Framework (CSF 2.0), and NIST AI Risk Management Framework (AI RMF). After building the artifacts, representative qualitative scenarios are shown with disruptions to cloud-native services, vulnerabilities in the software supply chain, cyber threats to critical infrastructure, and cascading service failures. The following scenarios are intended to illustrate how the proposed framework can be used to collect evidence, to analyze and help with evidence using AI, to evaluate policies, and to coordinate response, without resorting to numerical simulation or synthetic experimental evidence. Finally, the framework is evaluated using an ex-ante evaluation strategy. The evaluation does not assess the implementation performance but rather focuses on whether the framework meets the identified design requirements, is logically consistent, complies with internationally recognised cybersecurity standards, is feasible to implement and offers appropriate governance over AI-assisted decision-making. The resulting research is then repeated and disseminated via this manuscript, which can then serve as a basis for implementation and empirical research.

Application of Design Science Research Methodology

The six Design Science Research activities were systematically adapted to the present study, as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Application of Design Science Research Methodology

DSRM Activity	Application in This Study	Expected Output
Problem Identification	Identify fragmentation among cloud-native resilience, cybersecurity, AI, software assurance, and economic resilience	Research problem
Define Objectives	Derive design objectives from literature and international standards	Framework requirements
Design and Development	Develop the AI-driven Integrated Cyber-Economic Resilience (AICER) Framework	Conceptual framework
Demonstration	Apply the framework to representative cyber resilience scenarios	Scenario-based demonstration
Evaluation	Perform ex-ante assessment based on completeness, consistency, feasibility, governance, and standards alignment	Evaluation matrix
Communication	Disseminate the framework through scholarly publication	Research contribution

Adaptation of DSRM allows systematic development and it allows traceability between identified research problem, requirements identified from literary sources, conceptual framework and evaluation strategy. Every stage of the process has a direct influence on the final product and makes sure that each architectural element is not based on speculations but on already known theory. The approach to conceptual studies is different from what is normally done, which is to provide high-level architectural diagrams, and promotes requirement traceability, standards alignment, governance integration, and implementation readiness. This systematic development process goes a long way towards increasing the scientific rigor and the practical relevance of the framework.

Ex-Ante Evaluation Strategy

As the proposed AICER Framework has not yet been realised as an operational platform, the research in this study takes an ex-ante evaluation approach, in line with Design Science Research principles (Venable *et al.,* 2016). The effectiveness of a conceptual artifact prior to deployment is assessed through ex-ante evaluation, which examines if the conceptual artifact is suitable to address the identified research problem and to meet the design objectives. This assessment takes into account six interdependent aspects: Requirements Coverage: Identifies whether or not each requirement that was identified in the literature is documented in the framework architecture. Internal Consistency: Delves into the logic between AI analytics, cybersecurity controls, cloud-native operations, governance, and economic resilience. Standards Alignment: Assesses adherence to globally accepted standards such as NIST CSF 2.0, NIST SSDF, NIST AI RMF, SLSA, CVSS and EPSS. Practical Implementability: Evaluates the feasibility of implementing the proposed architecture with the current set of cloud-native technologies, security tools, AI systems, and orchestration solutions. Governance Adequacy: Assesses explainability, accountability, policy enforcement, human oversight and auditability. Scenario Applicability: Assesses if the framework yields logical decision pathways in representative cyber resilience scenarios. It is not claimed that the ex-ante evaluation provides operational superiority or quantitative performance improvements. Rather, it confirms the theoretical validity, technical feasibility, standards compatibility, and prototype readiness for future implementation and empirical testing of the proposed framework. On the other hand, it is planned to continue this research in the future by expert evaluation, controlled experiments, development of prototype in the cloud, fault injection tests, and deployment in critical infrastructure environments. The Proposed AI-driven Integrated Cyber-Economic Resilience (AICER) Framework is developed.

Development of the Proposed Aicer Framework

Framework Design Requirements and Design Principles

Increased reliance on cloud-native platforms by key national services and the complexity of cyber threats drive the proposed AI-driven Integrated Cyber-Economic Resilience (AICER) Framework. The literature review indicated that the domains of cloud-native resilience, AIOps, DevSecOps, software supply chain security, cybersecurity governance, and critical infrastructure protection have mostly been studied independently. While both enhance security and reliability, there is disjointed adoption, which can result in incomplete situational awareness and lagging response times to incidents and lack of coordinated decisions. To fill in this missing piece, the proposed architecture will focus on bringing operational intelligence, cyber security, software assurance, governance, and economic resilience into the same decision-support architecture. The framework is based on eight design requirements which were identified in literature and according to international standards in the cyber security field. Integrated Situational Awareness (R1): Correlates operational telemetry, cybersecurity intelligence, software assurance and infrastructure status, to provide a unified view of the operation. Cloud-Native

Dependency Awareness (R2): Obtains visibility into the relationship between microservices, containers, APIs, databases, and cloud services, and enables cascading failure analysis. AI-Assisted Operational Intelligence (R3): Leverages AI for anomaly detection, predictive analytics, incident correlation, root cause analysis and response recommendations, but retains humans in the loop. Secure Software Supply Chain Assurance (R4): Combines SBOM, SLSA, SSDF, software provenance and Vulnerability Assessment to facilitate trusted software deployment. Cyber Threat Intelligence Integration (R5): Regularly integrates vulnerabilities, exploit forecasts, threat intelligence and security alerts into operational decision-making. Policy-Aware Governance (R6): Policy, regulatory and Zero Trust controls are prioritized over AI-prioritized recommendations. Economic Impact Awareness (R7): Considers incident response on a service criticality, business continuity, public safety, and economic impact basis, not just on technical severity. Explainability and Human Oversight (R8): AI recommendations are backed by evidence, confidence scores, and policy reasoning; High impact decisions are made by humans. These requirements are realised in the form of five guiding design principles. The Evidence Integration Principle is the principle of integrated analysis of operational, cybersecurity and software assurance evidence. The Risk-Adaptive Decision Principle allows for decisions on the response strategy depending on the cyber risk, operational severity and economic impact. The Human-Centered AI Principle is that AI is not a controller, but a decision support tool. The Continuous Resilience Principle considers resilience as a continuous process of prevention, detection, response, recovery and adaptation. Lastly, the National Criticality Principle is a measure to ensure recovery priorities are based on the technical performance, social importance and economic consequences of a project. These requirements and design principles form the theoretical underpinning of the proposed AICER Framework, which provides a standards-aligned, policy-aware, and AI-assisted architecture to enhance secure cloud-native platforms and continuity of critical national services.

Table 3: Design Requirements and Framework Support

Design Requirement	Objective	Framework Component
R1: Integrated Situational Awareness	Correlate operational, security, and software evidence	Observability & Intelligence Layer
R2: Dependency Awareness	Identify cascading failures across cloud-native services	Cloud-Native Infrastructure Layer
R3: AI-Assisted Intelligence	Predict anomalies and recommend recovery actions	AI Intelligence Layer
R4: Software Supply Chain Assurance	Verify software integrity and provenance	Secure Software Delivery Layer
R5: Cyber Threat Intelligence	Integrate vulnerability and threat information	Cyber Threat Intelligence Layer
R6: Policy-Aware Governance	Enforce deterministic security controls	Governance Layer
R7: Economic Impact Assessment	Prioritize services according to national importance	Economic Resilience Layer
R8: Explainability & Human Oversight	Maintain transparency and accountability	Governance & Decision Layer

Architecture of the Proposed AICER Framework

The proposed AI-based Integrated Cyber-Economic Resilience (AICER) Framework is composed of seven interrelated layers, all of which contribute to secure cloud-native operations, AI-enabled cyber defense, software assurance, governance and critical service continuity. The AICER Framework is different from current solutions which focus on either cloud resilience, cybersecurity, or software assurance in isolation. The critical National Service layer sets the operation targets of critical sectors such as healthcare, finance, energy, transportation, telecommunications, manufacturing and digital government. Formulates and assigns service priority as per mission criticality, Service Level Objectives (SLOs), Recovery Time Objectives (RTOs), Recovery Point Objectives (RPOs), regulatory requirements and organization risk tolerance, ensuring that the response action is in line with the national and socioeconomic priorities. The Cloud-Native Infrastructure layer is the cloud-native environment, comprising of microservices, Kubernetes clusters, containers, services meshes, APIs, databases, storage, networking and hybrid cloud resources. It also pulls in continuous operational telemetry data, including resource usage, latency, throughput, service dependencies, deployment metadata, and runtime events and enables automated actions including scaling, workload migration, traffic routing, and disaster recovery. Cyber Threat Intelligence and Observability layer brings together operational monitoring and cybersecurity intelligence by correlating system metrics, logs, distributed traces, security alerts, vulnerability data, threat intelligence feeds, CVSS and EPSS scores, SBOM data, software provenance, deployment history, and more. The resulting evidence can be comprehensive, providing situational awareness for both operational and security analysis. The Intelligence Engine is AI Intelligence and Decision

Analytics, which leverages AI technologies to provide anomaly detection, predictive failure analysis, incident correlation, root cause analysis, cyber risk prioritization, workload forecasting, and recovery recommendations. AI will provide explainable and evidence-based recommendations with confidence and impact scores, and final decisions will be made based on organizational policies and human supervision. Secure Software Delivery and Supply Chain Assurance layer validates software integrity across the software life cycle through source code integrity, SBOM, software provenance, container images, dependency vulnerabilities, Infrastructure-as-Code, SLSA compliance and NIST SSDF requirements. In contrast to a traditional DevSecOps pipeline, software assurance information is available during runtime and can be used for operational decision making. Economic Resilience Assessment layer builds on traditional cyber resilience to assess incidents based on business continuity, public safety, financial loss, services reliance, regulatory requirements, organization reputation, and national economic implications. These factors are useful when multiple critical services are impacted at once to help prioritise recovery. Governance, Policy, and Response Coordination layer orchestrates organizational policies, AI suggestions, compliance mandates, security controls, audit logs, and human approval. High impact operations like deployment, rollback, service isolation, workload migration or disaster recovery are always performed automatically in the event of policy conditions being met, and a human will continue to be required to authorize them in all other cases.

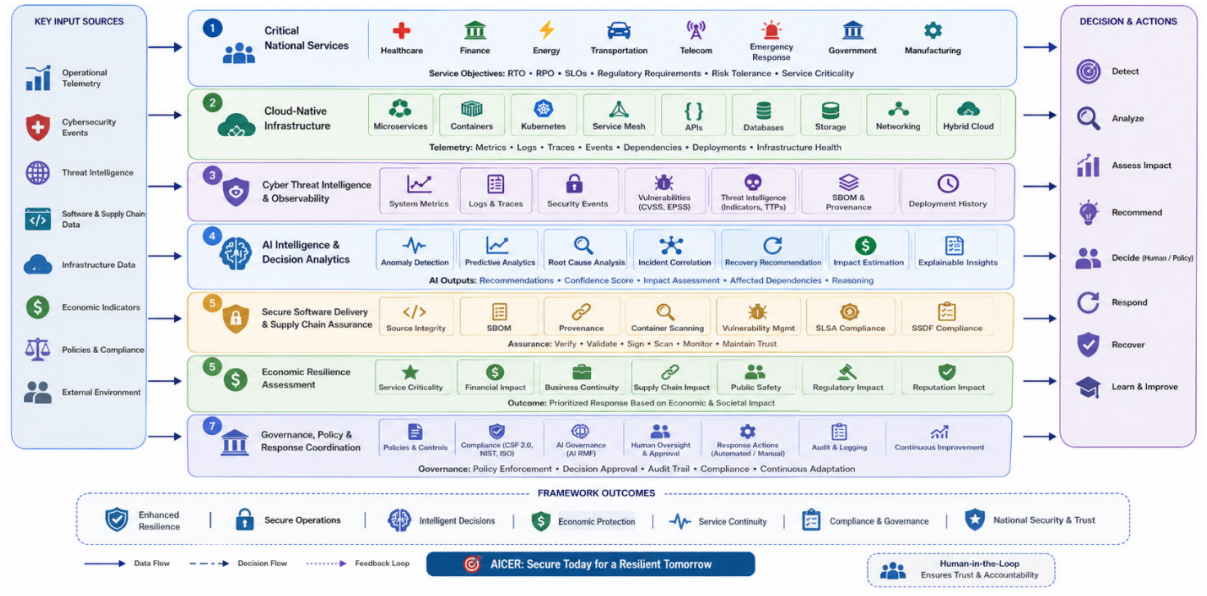

Figure 2: Proposed Multi-Layer Architecture for AI-Driven Secure Cloud-Native Resilience

Together, these seven layers provide a standards-aligned, policy-aware, and AI-assisted architecture that strengthens cloud-native resilience while supporting secure, reliable, and continuous operation of critical national services.

Table 4: Layers of the Proposed AICER Framework

Layer	Primary Inputs	Primary Outputs
Critical National Services	Mission objectives, regulations, service criticality	Business priorities, recovery objectives
Cloud-Native Infrastructure	Workloads, containers, Kubernetes, APIs	Telemetry, service health, runtime events
Cyber Threat Intelligence & Observability	Logs, traces, vulnerabilities, threat intelligence	Integrated operational-security evidence
AI Intelligence & Decision Analytics	Telemetry, cyber intelligence, dependency graphs	Predictions, root-cause analysis, recovery recommendations
Secure Software Delivery	Source code, SBOM, provenance, CI/CD pipelines	Software assurance status
Economic Resilience Assessment	Business impact, criticality, financial indicators	Economic priority scores, continuity assessment
Governance & Response Coordination	AI recommendations, policies, security controls	Approved operational response, audit trail

Information Flow Within the AICER Framework

The proposed framework is not a linear processing pipeline, but rather a cyber-resilience lifecycle. The Critical National Services Layer is where critical service objectives are first defined. The Observability Layer continuously collects operational telemetry data from cloud-native infrastructure, software assurance data, and cyber threat intelligence data. The AI Intelligence Layer analyzes these evidence sources, which are all homogeneous and joined under a single operational context. The AI engine generates predictive analytics, anomaly detection findings, incident correlation and response suggestions, considering operation conditions as well as cybersecurity evidence. At the same time, integrity, provenance and compliance of software-to-software assurance policies are verified by the Secure Software Delivery Layer. The Economic Resilience Layer quantifies the potential impacts of a disruption of services on organizations and the nation. Lastly, the Governance Layer compares the AI suggestions with deterministic safety policies, regulatory necessities, organizational risk threshold, and human approval guidelines. Any action taken by the operator – such as scaling services, migrating workloads, rolling back, isolating or disaster-recovering – is done within the cloud-native infrastructure. Their results are then continuously integrated into the observability platform, allowing for adaptive learning, policy improvements and continuous resilience tuning. It's a closed-loop architecture that allows organisations to move out of a reactive incident management approach and adopt a proactive, AI-powered approach to cyber resilience with security governance, software assurance and economic continuity as part of the operational decision making process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Theoretical Measures for Secure Cloud-Native Resilience

The proposed AI-driven Integrated Cyber-Economic Resilience (AICER) Framework will not create new metrics, but rather supports a unified decision-support architecture that combines internationally recognized cybersecurity, cloud reliability, software engineering and governance metrics. It is standards based to increase interoperability and facilitate full resilience analysis. Service Level Objectives (SLOs) are used with Mean Time Between Failures (MTBF) and Mean Time to Recovery (MTTR) to measure cloud-native operational resilience. MTBF and MTTR provide a good indication of the reliability and recovery capability of a system, while SLOs define acceptable service performance in terms of availability, latency, throughput, and error rates (Beyer *et al.,* 2016). DORA metrics deployment frequency, lead time for changes, change failure rate, and mean time to restore service, offer insights into deployment quality and operational stability of software delivery performance (Forsgren *et al.,* 2018). The Common Vulnerability Scoring System (CVSS) and the Exploit Prediction Scoring System (EPSS) are used to assess Cybersecurity posture, allowing prioritization based on severity of the vulnerability and the likelihood of it being exploited. To verify software provenance and supply chain integrity, Software Bill of Materials (SBOM), Software Levels for Supply Chain Security (SLSA), and the NIST Secure Software Development Framework (SSDF) are used to ensure software trustworthiness. AI governance is guided by the NIST AI Risk Management Framework (AI RMF), and organizational resilience follows the NIST Cybersecurity Framework (CSF 2.0) and will support policy-aware and explainable decision-making (NIST, 2023, 2024).

To support integrated resilience assessment, the framework defines a Composite Resilience Score (CRS) that combines operational, cybersecurity, software assurance, governance, and economic dimensions:

$CRS= \omega_1 O+ \omega_2 C+ \omega_3 S+\omega_4 G+\omega_5 E$

where

O = Operational resilience (SLOs, MTBF, MTTR, DORA)

C = Cybersecurity posture (CVSS, EPSS)

S = Software supply chain assurance (SBOM, SLSA, SSDF)

G = Governance and AI compliance (NIST CSF 2.0, AI RMF)

E = Economic resilience assessment

ω_i = weighting coefficients satisfying

$\sum^{5}_{(i=1)} \omega_i=1,0\leq\omega_i\leq1$

The weighting factors can be adjusted according to organizational priorities, enabling the framework to balance operational performance, cybersecurity readiness, software assurance, governance, and economic impact within a unified resilience evaluation model. This composite measure provides a theoretical basis for AI-assisted, policy-aware decision-making while remaining compatible with established industry standards.

Table 5: Theoretical Measures Integrated within the AICER Framework

Measure	Purpose	Framework Layer
Service Level Objectives (SLOs)	Service availability and reliability	Critical Services
MTBF	Operational reliability	Cloud Infrastructure
MTTR	Recovery efficiency	Cloud Infrastructure
DORA Metrics	Software delivery performance	Secure Software Delivery
CVSS	Vulnerability severity	Cyber Threat Intelligence
EPSS	Exploitation probability	Cyber Threat Intelligence
SBOM	Software dependency transparency	Supply Chain Assurance

SLSA	Software provenance assurance	Supply Chain Assurance
NIST SSDF	Secure software development	Governance
NIST AI RMF	AI governance and explainability	AI Intelligence
NIST CSF 2.0	Organizational cyber resilience	Governance

AI-Driven Decision Mechanism

The AICER Framework is based on an AI-driven decision process that uses cloud-native operational telemetry, cybersecurity intelligence, software assurance evidence, and economic impact analysis to assist with resilient decision-making. The proposed mechanism continuously analyses multiple evidence sources to offer context-aware recommendations while retaining the human oversight, unlike the traditional rule-based monitoring systems which use fixed thresholds. First, data is constantly collected from cloud-native infrastructure. Cybersecurity evidence such as vulnerability assessment, intrusion detection alerts, software provenance information, threat intelligence feeds, etc., is combined with operational telemetry, including application metrics, system logs, distributed traces, service dependencies, Kubernetes events, and resource utilization. These various data sources are put into a consistent and connected context by normalizing and correlating them. The AI Intelligence Layer then conducts anomaly detection, incident correlation, dependency analysis and predictive failure assessment with machine learning models. The AI engine is not providing deterministic recommendations, but rather probabilistic recommendations, with confidence levels and explanations. When abnormal latency is found in a payment processing service, the AI engine analyzes the cause of the latency issue, whether it is due to exhaustion of infrastructure resources, problems in the software deployment, network congestion or an active cyber-attack, and recommends a recovery plan accordingly. The proposed framework includes a policy-aware decision engine that assesses the AI recommendations against governance policies and regulatory requirements of the organization. Automated actions can only be approved if all mandatory security constraints, such as software provenance verification, compliance requirements, access control policies, and Zero Trust principles are met. AI recommendations therefore are not decision-making bodies as such, but rather decision-support bodies. The final solution combines four complementary aspects: Operational Status: service availability, latency, resource utilisation, MTBF, MTTR.

Cybersecurity risk: CVSS, EPSS, threat intelligence, attack indicators and intrusion alerts.

Software Assurance: SBOM validation, SLSA compliance, adherence to SSDF, deployment integrity.

Economic Impact: Critical Service Dependency, Financial Consequences, Regulatory Obligations and Societal Impact.

The Governance Layer is a decision-making process that decides if the suggested action can be taken automatically or will need a person to approve. Low risk operational actions like workload scaling and/or pod replacement can happen automatically. However, authorization of a designated operator is required for high impact decisions, such as activation of the disaster recovery procedure, isolation of services or changes in operations across the country.

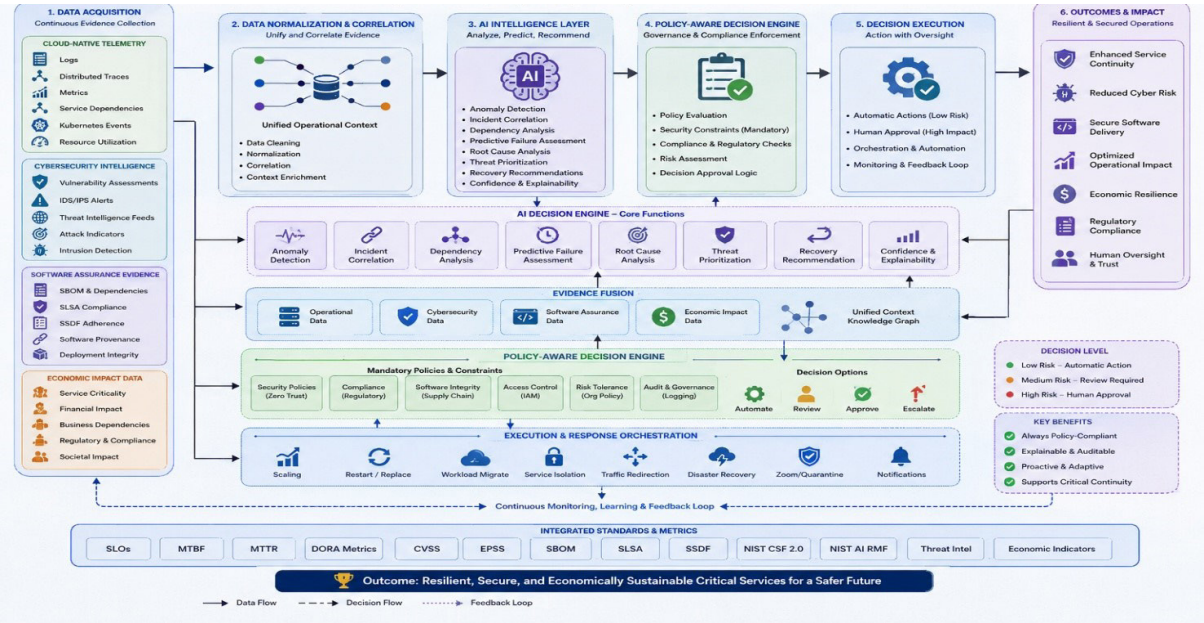

Figure 3: Policy-Aware AI Decision Mechanism for Secure Cloud-Native Resilience

Scenario-Based Demonstration

A representative scenario of cyber resilience of a national digital payment platform is selected to illustrate the applicability of the proposed framework. Digital payment systems are vital national infrastructure since a failure has an impact on financial transactions and commercial activities as well as on public confidence. Suppose a cloud-based payment application running on a Kubernetes cluster starts behaving abnormally in terms of latency after a standard software update. Let's say a payment application is deployed in a cloud-native way to a kubernetes cluster, and begins to deviate from normal latency after a normal software update. At the same time, there is a newly public vulnerability in one of the deployed container dependencies that is detected by cybersecurity monitoring. These observations would likely be treated separately with traditional monitoring systems, which could lead to a delay in making an accurate diagnosis and longer recovery time. The different kinds of information that are continuously integrated in the proposed AICER Framework are: Operational telemetry, deployment metadata, software provenance information, and cyber threat intelligence. The Observability Layer detects unusual latency, high error rates and more frequent pod restarts. At the same time, the Cyber Threat Intelligence Layer notes that the impacted software dependency has a high CVSS rating and has a high EPSS probability, which means there is a high chance that it is being exploited in the wild. The AI Intelligence Layer integrates these stand-alone observations with deployment history, service dependency graphs. It seems the recently installed software package included a vulnerable library that impacted authentication services helping with payment processing, according to root cause analysis. The AI engine estimates that if corrective actions are not taken, then failures will spread to other financial services if the deployment continues. Before operational actions are taken, the Governance Layer validates software provenance by reviewing the provenance documentation and SLSA compliance records and assessing organizational policies and regulatory requirements. Because software assurance policies are not met, the framework will not accept any continuation of deployment, despite the moderate operational confidence declared by the AI engine. Rather, the Governance Layer approves an automatic rollback to the last known good version of software with isolated services and operators alerting cybersecurity operators. After a rollback, service is resumed back to acceptable service levels, operational telemetry is used to confirm recovery and all evidence is recorded in the audit repository. The case demonstrates how operational intelligence, cybersecurity evidence, software assurance, AI analytics, and governance, when combined, help to make coordinated decisions hard to accomplish with the use of individual operational tools.

Ex-Ante Evaluation

The proposed AICER Framework is a conceptual design artefact; thus evaluation is based on an ex-ante evaluation, following principles of Design Science Research (Venable *et al.,* 2016). The evaluation will establish if the framework meets the research identified design objectives, and if the architecture of the framework is theoretically sound, standards compliant and practically applicable. 6 dimensions of evaluation are taken into account. Completeness evaluates if the framework covers all the key elements for secure cloud-native resilience. It provides a decision-support model that combines cloud-native infrastructure, cybersecurity intelligence, AI-driven analytics, software supply chain assurance, governance and economic resilience into a single package. Consistency assesses the logical relationships between the layers of the architecture. Information is continually shared between operational monitoring, AI analytics, governance and response coordination, with no conflicting decision paths. Standards Alignment covers compatibility to nationally and internationally recognized standards, such as NIST Cybersecurity Framework (CSF 2.0), NIST Artificial Intelligence Risk Management Framework (NIST AI RMF), NIST Security Services Definition (NIST SSDF), SLSA, SBOM, CVSS, EPSS and DORA metrics. The framework does not bring in any proprietary evaluation mechanisms but instead follows these standards. Practical Implementability assesses whether existing cloud-native technologies such as Kubernetes, container orchestration, observability platforms, DevSecOps pipelines, vulnerability scanners, AI analytics platforms can be leveraged for the proposed architecture. Governance Adequacy evaluates if AI recommendations are explainable, auditable, policy-aware, and under the human control. While the probabilistic AI predictions can shift, the deterministic organizational policies always hold the upper hand, thereby lowering risks involved with autonomous decision making. Lastly, Scenario Applicability addresses the consistency of the framework for decision-making when it comes to representative cloud failures, cyberattacks, software supply chain compromises, ransomware incidents, and infrastructure disruptions to critical services.

Overall, the ex-ante evaluation demonstrates that the

Table 6: Ex-Ante Evaluation of the Proposed AICER Framework

Evaluation Criterion	Assessment	Outcome
Architectural Completeness	Integration of cloud, AI, security, governance, and economic resilience	Satisfied
Internal Consistency	Logical interaction among all framework layers	Satisfied
Standards Compliance	Alignment with NIST CSF 2.0, AI RMF, SSDF, SLSA, CVSS, EPSS, DORA	Satisfied

Practical Feasibility	Compatible with existing cloud-native technologies	Satisfied
Governance Support	Human oversight, explainability, and policy enforcement	Satisfied
Scenario Applicability	Effective across representative cyber resilience scenarios	Satisfied

proposed AICER Framework provides a coherent, standards-aligned, and practically feasible conceptual architecture for enhancing secure cloud-native platforms and ensuring the continuity of critical national services. While empirical validation remains future work, the framework establishes a robust theoretical foundation for prototype implementation, experimental assessment, and deployment within government agencies, critical infrastructure operators, and enterprise cloud environments.

Discussion

With cloud-based platforms becoming more popular, the security and continuity of critical national services is becoming a critical operational concern. Cloud-native technologies offer improved scalability and operational efficiency, but they also bring cybersecurity challenges such as distributed architectures, software supply chains and dynamic infrastructures. So far, all studies focus on cloud resilience, AI, cyber security or governance as separate fields, and consequently have fragmented solutions in incident management. The proposed AI-driven Integrated Cyber-Economic Resilience (AICER) Framework fills this gap by connecting cloud-native operations, cybersecurity intelligence, AI-assisted analytics, software supply chain assurance, governance, and economic resilience into an all-encompassing decision support architecture. One of the main advantages of the framework is the human-centered AI approach: AI is used to help with anomaly detection, root cause analysis, predictive analysis and recommendations for response, while maintaining policy-driven governance, and human oversight. The framework also extends the traditional DevSecOps by adding SBOM, SLSA, and software provenance as part of runtime resilience management, allowing for ongoing cloud software and operational performance evaluation with software trustworthiness. The AICER Framework also expands the scope of resilience assessment by incorporating the economic dimension with technical metrics. In addition to the operational tools it has (SLOs, MTBF, MTTR, etc.), it takes into account the criticality of services, regulatory requirements, business continuity and social and economic consequences for incident prioritization to be more effective. Moreover, the framework is built on various industry-standard frameworks such as NIST CSF 2.0, NIST SSDF, NIST AI RMF, CVSS, EPSS, SLSA, SBOM, and DORA metrics, which makes it interoperable and applicable to cloud-native environments. Although these contributions, the proposed framework is still conceptual in nature and has not yet been empirically implemented and validated by Design Science Research Methodology (DSRM). The AI-assisted decision mechanism is deliberately technology-independent so that it can adapt to varying organisational contexts, and the assessment is only a demonstration and ex-ante assessment of the scenario-based solution. Future research will include developing a prototype for the framework, using digital twin simulations to evaluate the framework, conducting fault injection experiments, and applying it in practice across case studies in cloud-native environments based on Kubernetes. Advanced AI technologies, such as graph neural networks, reinforcement learning, and explainable AI (XAI), are additional innovations that can enhance predictive analytics and decision-making support. In summary, the AICER Framework offers a holistic conceptual approach to creating secure cloud-native platforms through cloud operations, the inclusion of cybersecurity, AI, governance, software assurance, and economic resiliency to enhance critical service continuity and organizational resiliency.

CONCLUSION

As more and more critical national services are delivered through cloud-native platforms, their need for secure, resilient and intelligent operational frameworks has grown. Cloud-native technologies offer enhanced scalability and agility, but also create intricate cybersecurity, software supply chain and governance issues that are typically tackled separately. This study introduced the concept of the AI-driven Integrated Cyber-Economic Resilience (AICER) Framework, which is a conceptual architecture constructed based on the Design Science Research Methodology (DSRM). The framework brings together elements of cloud-native infrastructure, cybersecurity intelligence, AI enabled analytics, software supply chain assurance, governance, and economic resilience in a single model that offers a decision-support solution. It integrates operational telemetry, cyber threat intelligence, software provenance, and organizational policies to enable coordinated, policy-informed decision-making to ensure critical service continuity. One of the areas of key contribution of the framework is the embedding of relevant internationally recognised standards, such as NIST CSF 2.0, NIST AI RMF, NIST SSDF, SLSA, SBOM, CVSS, EPSS, SLOs, MTBF, MTTR and DORA metrics into a single resilience architecture. The human-centred AI approach also helps ensure that recommendations made by AI are explainable, transparent and under organisational governance and control. The scenario-based demonstration and ex-ante evaluation have shown that the proposed framework gives a coherent conceptual basis to support the strengthening of secure cloud-native platforms. While the empirical validation is future work, the framework provides a systematic blueprint for integrating cloud operations, cybersecurity, software

assurance and governance in critical infrastructure environments. Prototype implementation, real-world validation, digital twin simulations and the integration of advanced AI techniques to further enhance predictive capabilities and operational resilience are areas for future research. In summary the AICER Framework offers guidance in a tangible way to create secure, trusted, and resilient cloud-based platforms to support critical national services and long-term cyber and economic resilience.

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