

Zero Trust Architecture in Multi-Cloud Environments

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Abstract: Zero Trust Architecture constitutes a fundamental reorientation in cybersecurity methodology, replacing conventional boundary-centered protective systems to confront the intricacies of modern distributed computing. This security framework discards all presumptive trust, irrespective of connection origins or network locations, mandating perpetual validation for every resource request across digital infrastructures. The shift toward distributed cloud platforms intensifies deployment challenges while heightening the demand for thorough protective measures that span beyond singular provider constraints. Zero Trust methodologies forge uniform security stances across diverse cloud ecosystems through exacting authentication protocols, precise access limitations, and vigilant observation practices. The framework coordination integrates identity administration mechanisms, cryptographic standards, network partitioning approaches, and anomaly detection functionalities to establish unified protective structures. Corporate implementation necessitates deliberate planning comprising technological adaptations, operational refinements, and institutional shifts to accommodate verification-based security paradigms. Harmonization across varied cloud ecosystems demands normalized deployment tactics while incorporating provider-distinct security attributes. As distributed computing landscapes advance, Zero Trust Architecture becomes increasingly vital for maintaining protective integrity throughout progressively sophisticated deployments, constructing foundations for durable operations in contemporary settings while confronting intricate threats directed at multi-cloud infrastructures through methodical verification procedures.

Keywords: Zero trust architecture, Multi-cloud security, Continuous verification, Microsegmentation, Identity management, Cloud security.

INTRODUCTION

The conventional perimeter-based security model has undergone a profound transformation in contemporary digital environments. Traditional approaches that established clear boundaries between trusted internal networks and untrusted external zones demonstrate increasing inadequacy when confronting modern threat vectors (Palo Alto Networks,). This fundamental limitation has catalyzed the emergence of Zero Trust Architecture as an alternative security paradigm, eliminating implicit trust assumptions regardless of connection source or resource location. The architectural principle "never trust, always verify" represents a comprehensive reformulation of security foundations, requiring continuous authentication and authorization for all access attempts across distributed environments.

Simultaneously, organizations increasingly implement multi-cloud deployments to enhance operational resilience, optimize resource utilization, and mitigate vendor dependency risks (Rehan, H. 2025). This distributed approach introduces substantial security challenges through heterogeneous environments with distinct control

mechanisms, operational characteristics, and protection capabilities. Security teams face growing complexity in managing consistent policies across disparate platforms while maintaining comprehensive visibility throughout distributed infrastructures. These challenges necessitate unified security frameworks transcending individual provider boundaries.

Zero Trust Architecture offers uniquely suitable security mechanisms for multi-cloud environments through its identity-centric approach, granular access controls, and continuous verification requirements (Palo Alto Networks,). The architectural model establishes consistent security postures irrespective of underlying infrastructure providers, addressing the fundamental challenges of distributed computing environments. By implementing verification requirements for all access attempts regardless of origination point, Zero Trust creates uniform protection mechanisms adaptable to diverse cloud platforms while accommodating the dynamic nature of modern digital operations (Rehan, H. 2025).

Table 1: Key Components of Zero Trust Architecture (Palo Alto Networks,; Rehan, H. 2025)

Component	Description	Key Elements
Identity Management	Uses verified identity as the main security control point	Enterprise identity services, Multi-factor authentication, Attribute-based access control, Session monitoring systems, Identity governance platforms
Network Segmentation	Divides networks into smaller protected zones	Software-defined perimeters, Microsegmentation technologies, Virtual network boundaries, Cross-cloud security groups,

		Application-aware firewalls
Continuous Verification	Constantly checks all resource access attempts	Endpoint posture assessment, Real-time authentication validation, Behavioral analytics, Threat detection systems, Policy enforcement points
Context-Based Access	Uses situational factors to make access decisions	Adaptive authentication engines, Geolocation verification, Time-window constraints, Device compliance checking, Risk-based authentication tools
Data Encryption	Protects information wherever it exists	Transport Layer Security protocols, At-rest encryption mechanisms, Cross-platform key management, Certificate lifecycle automation, Data classification frameworks

ZERO TRUST ARCHITECTURAL PRINCIPLES

Persistent verification mechanisms constitute fundamental operational elements within Zero Trust implementations, transcending traditional static credential approaches to establish continuous evaluation throughout authenticated sessions (Amelia, Stella & Li, Minghao. 2025). These sophisticated systems maintain vigilant assessment of multiple risk factors, including unusual behavioral patterns, geographical position shifts, and resource utilization sequences, to detect potential compromise during active sessions. The nuanced evaluation methodologies facilitate graduated security responses calibrated to identified risk thresholds rather than simplistic access determinations, simultaneously strengthening protective measures while preserving necessary functional capabilities.

The core architectural concepts underpinning Zero Trust frameworks demonstrate exceptional applicability within multi-cloud ecosystems characterized by dispersed assets across diverse platform environments (Shekhar, G. 2025). The standardized verification requirements create consistent security controls independent of underlying infrastructure providers, directly addressing the principal security challenges embedded within distributed cloud deployments. Through the implementation of identity-focused security architectures with uninterrupted verification protocols, Zero Trust methodologies extend beyond individual provider security constructs while sustaining comprehensive protective measures throughout distributed environments, creating durable foundations for secure operations across multi-cloud infrastructures.

Table 2: Building Zero Trust in Multi-Cloud Environments (Amelia, Stella & Li, Minghao. 2025; Shekhar, G. 2025)

Implementation Phase	Key Activities	Critical Considerations
Security Foundation Assessment	Inventory sensitive data assets across cloud platforms. Document current authentication workflows and access pathways. Evaluate existing privilege allocation structures.	Focus assessment on business-critical systems first. Include shadow IT discovery in the evaluation process. Consider regulatory compliance requirements across regions.
Identity Framework Development	Deploy a centralized identity infrastructure spanning multiple providers. Integrate robust verification mechanisms, including physical token integration. Implement conditional access policies tied to risk profiles.	Select identity solutions with strong federation capabilities. Consider the user experience impacts of authentication requirements. Plan for legacy system integration challenges.
Access Control Refinement	Establish granular permission boundaries through network constructs. Implement resource isolation through cloud-native segmentation tools. Deploy adaptive privilege management based on risk scoring.	Design controls for consistency across different provider environments. Consider the performance impacts of segmentation strategies. Plan for operational exceptions and emergency access provisions.
Visibility Enhancement	Establish unified monitoring across disparate cloud environments. Deploy	Address log aggregation challenges across platforms. Establish baseline behavioral

	behavioral analytics to identify anomalous activities. Create automated remediation workflows for common threat patterns.	patterns before enforcement. Consider data sovereignty issues for centralized monitoring.
Continuous Optimization	Conduct regular penetration testing against security controls. Simulate sophisticated attack patterns to validate defenses. Refine architecture based on emerging threat intelligence.	Incorporate lessons from incident response into architecture. Schedule regular architecture reviews against evolving best practices. Maintain a balance between security objectives and operational requirements.

MULTI-CLOUD CHALLENGES

Administrative oversight of diverse multi-provider cloud infrastructures creates considerable intricacy, demanding specialized proficiency across distinct structural designs, service delivery approaches, and administrative consoles (King, H. 2025). Protection specialists encounter formidable obstacles traversing these multifaceted environments while sustaining thorough transparency and authority throughout decentralized frameworks. The technological discrepancies between platforms require concentrated expertise spanning numerous vendor-specific implementation techniques, generating prospective knowledge deficiencies and functional ineffectiveness within protection procedures. These architectural variations necessitate a comprehensive understanding of provider-specific capabilities, configuration methodologies, and operational constraints, substantially increasing workforce development requirements while potentially extending incident response timeframes through disjointed management processes. Such complexity frequently results in inconsistent security implementations across distributed environments, potentially creating protection disparities through dissimilar configuration options and administrative capabilities inherent within heterogeneous cloud deployments.

Identity management fragmentation across multiple cloud platforms creates authentication and authorization challenges through disconnected credential stores, inconsistent access control models, and disparate privilege management frameworks (King, H. 2025). Organizations frequently implement separate identity systems for individual providers, creating potential security vulnerabilities through disjointed user provisioning processes, inconsistent access termination procedures, and challenges in maintaining comprehensive visibility throughout distributed environments. These fragmented identity

structures complicate security governance while potentially creating credential proliferation that expands potential attack surfaces.

Information safeguarding across dispersed cloud ecosystems presents substantial obstacles concerning territorial mandates, legal domain distinctions, and uniform protective measure deployment (Patel, A. 2025). Inter-cloud information transmission regularly crosses numerous governance boundaries with differing regulatory frameworks, establishing intricate conformity responsibilities while demanding advanced defensive systems throughout information existence periods. The decentralized character of multi-provider deployments intensifies challenges in content categorization, preservation policy enforcement, and thorough utilization supervision across diverse repository implementations with inconsistent inherent security functionalities. These protection variations necessitate comprehensive architectural approaches establishing standardized safeguards irrespective of underlying infrastructure characteristics while addressing specific compliance obligations applicable to particular geographic regions and data classifications.

Compliance verification within distributed multi-cloud environments presents substantial challenges through fragmented audit trails, inconsistent logging mechanisms, and variable monitoring capabilities across providers (King, H. 2025). Organizations face increasing complexity, demonstrating regulatory adherence throughout distributed infrastructures, particularly regarding continuous compliance validation and comprehensive evidence collection across heterogeneous environments. The diverse implementation methodologies across providers complicate standardized compliance frameworks, frequently necessitating customized approaches addressing specific platform capabilities while maintaining consistent validation methodologies

throughout distributed deployments (Patel, A. 2025).

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

Identity-centric security approaches establish foundational protection mechanisms for multi-cloud environments, positioning authenticated identity as the primary security boundary rather than traditional network perimeters (Patil, K. 2024). This architectural approach implements consistent authentication and authorization frameworks throughout distributed environments, transcending individual provider boundaries through standardized identity verification mechanisms. The implementation creates unified security controls addressing the fundamental challenges of multi-cloud deployments through comprehensive identity governance spanning heterogeneous environments while maintaining consistent privilege management throughout distributed resources.

Network segmentation strategies extending across cloud boundaries establish critical protection mechanisms limiting lateral movement capabilities throughout distributed environments, regardless of underlying infrastructure providers (Patil, K. 2024). These architectural approaches implement microsegmentation techniques, creating granular protection boundaries around individual resources rather than broad network zones, significantly reducing potential attack surfaces while containing compromise impacts. The cross-cloud implementation establishes consistent protection mechanisms throughout distributed environments while accommodating provider-specific implementation methodologies through standardized architectural frameworks adaptable to diverse infrastructures.

Continuous monitoring requirements across disparate platforms establish comprehensive visibility throughout multi-cloud environments, enabling effective threat detection while supporting verification mechanisms essential within Zero Trust frameworks (Patil, K. 2024). The implementation creates unified monitoring capabilities spanning provider boundaries through

standardized data collection mechanisms, analysis frameworks, and alerting methodologies adaptable to heterogeneous environments. This consistent visibility establishes essential foundations for security operations across distributed infrastructures while supporting automated response capabilities addressing identified threats regardless of their location throughout multi-cloud deployments.

Policy enforcement mechanisms addressing heterogeneous infrastructures establish consistent security controls throughout distributed environments, implementing standardized protection frameworks while accommodating provider-specific implementation requirements (Patil, K. 2024). The architectural approach creates unified governance structures spanning cloud boundaries through centralized policy definition mechanisms with distributed enforcement capabilities adaptable to diverse infrastructures. This implementation methodology establishes consistent security postures throughout multi-cloud environments while addressing the technical variations between providers through standardized policy frameworks with flexible implementation approaches addressing platform-specific capabilities.

Risk-based adaptive access control implementation creates sophisticated authorization frameworks that evaluate multiple contextual factors beyond identity verification, establishing dynamic security responses proportional to observed risk levels (Patil, K. 2024). These systems incorporate behavioral patterns, geolocation information, device characteristics, and resource sensitivity within comprehensive risk assessments, informing authorization decisions throughout distributed environments. The adaptive approach transcends traditional binary access controls through graduated security responses, implementing appropriate protection mechanisms based on comprehensive risk evaluation while maintaining operational functionality throughout multi-cloud deployments regardless of underlying infrastructure providers.

Table 3: Best Practices for Zero Trust in Multi-Cloud Environments (Patil, K. 2024)

Strategic Principle	Implementation Guidance	Operational Benefits
Minimal Permission Allocation	Implement default-deny postures with explicit authorization requirements for all resource access	Reduces potential attack surfaces while limiting lateral movement capabilities throughout distributed environments
Comprehensive Cryptographic	Deploy uniform encryption standards across all data states throughout	Establishes consistent data protection regardless of the environment location

Protection	distributed storage locations and transmission pathways	while addressing potential access through unauthorized channels
Persistent Access Verification	Establish unified monitoring frameworks spanning provider boundaries with centralized analysis capabilities	Creates comprehensive visibility throughout heterogeneous environments while enabling rapid threat identification across distributed resources
Deployment Integrity Assurance	Implement reproducible infrastructure methodologies utilizing validated templates with immutable operational characteristics	Eliminates configuration drift while ensuring consistent security implementations throughout resource lifecycles
Systematic Control Validation	Conduct regular assessment processes evaluating security effectiveness against emerging threat vectors	Identifies potential protection gaps while validating architectural integrity throughout evolving multi-cloud deployments

TECHNICAL COMPONENTS

The implementation of unified identity management systems establishes foundational security mechanisms for Zero Trust Architecture across heterogeneous cloud environments. These infrastructural components create consistent authentication frameworks spanning multiple providers through standardized protocols, federated trust relationships, and synchronized credential management (Mo, C. 2023). The architectural approach implements centralized identity governance while accommodating provider-specific implementation requirements, addressing fragmentation challenges inherent within distributed environments. Advanced implementations incorporate privileged access management capabilities, lifecycle automation, and comprehensive auditing mechanisms, ensuring consistent security postures throughout distributed infrastructures regardless of underlying platform variations.

Authentication infrastructure development across multi-cloud environments encounters substantial implementation challenges regarding integration complexity, protocol compatibility, and consistent security policy enforcement (Mo, C. 2023). These technical obstacles necessitate sophisticated architectural approaches, establishing standardized verification mechanisms adaptable to diverse provider implementations while maintaining uniform security requirements. The integration frequently requires specialized federation capabilities, custom connector development, and extensive configuration adjustments addressing platform-specific authentication methodologies, potentially introducing operational complexities while establishing comprehensive verification frameworks throughout distributed environments.

Cryptographic protection mechanisms securing data transmission between cloud environments

represent critical components within Zero Trust Architectures, establishing confidentiality safeguards throughout distributed infrastructures (Mo, C. 2023). These protection systems implement consistent encryption standards across provider boundaries through certificate-based authentication, robust key management frameworks, and standardized cryptographic protocols. The architectural implementation addresses potential vulnerability exposures during cross-cloud data transfers while maintaining transmission integrity throughout heterogeneous environments, establishing essential protection mechanisms supporting Zero Trust principles across distributed infrastructures.

Application programming interface security across multi-cloud environments presents substantial protection challenges regarding consistent authentication enforcement, transmission protection, and comprehensive monitoring requirements (Mo, C. 2023). These protection frameworks implement standardized security mechanisms, including request verification, rate limitation, parameter validation, and comprehensive logging throughout distributed service interactions. The architectural approach establishes consistent protection boundaries throughout programmatic access points regardless of underlying platform implementation, addressing potential vulnerability exposures while maintaining operational functionality across heterogeneous environments.

Security orchestration platforms establish unified policy management capabilities across heterogeneous cloud environments, implementing consistent protection mechanisms throughout distributed infrastructures (Mo, C. 2023). These coordination systems facilitate standardized security implementations through centralized policy definition, automated deployment

mechanisms, and comprehensive compliance verification regardless of underlying provider variation. The architectural approach addresses operational complexities inherent within multi-cloud environments while maintaining protection

consistency, establishing essential foundations for Zero Trust implementation across distributed infrastructures through unified security management capabilities adaptable to diverse platform requirements.

Table 4: Benefits of Zero Trust Architecture (Mo, C. 2023)

Advantage Category	Operational Impact	Strategic Value
Security Enhancement	Minimizes potential attack surfaces through restricted privilege allocation and continuous verification requirements	Establishes comprehensive protection postures addressing both external threats and insider risks through consistent verification frameworks
Breach Containment	Limits unauthorized lateral movement capabilities through explicit authorization requirements for all resource access	Reduces potential compromise scope through compartmentalized access restrictions regardless of the initial entry point
Comprehensive Visibility	Provides detailed insights into access patterns and resource utilization throughout distributed environments	Creates extensive audit capabilities supporting both incident response and compliance verification through unified monitoring frameworks
Advanced Threat Mitigation	Restricts propagation pathways through segmented environments with explicit verification requirements	Diminishes the effectiveness of sophisticated persistence mechanisms relying on unrestricted internal movement capabilities
Infrastructure Adaptability	Accommodates evolving operational requirements through flexible implementation frameworks	Supports organizational growth while maintaining consistent security postures throughout expanding digital environments
Incident Response Efficiency	Enables precise isolation capabilities through granular control mechanisms across distributed resources	Reduces containment timeframes through immediate restriction capabilities targeting compromised system components
Distributed Workforce Support	Implements consistent protection mechanisms regardless of connection location or device characteristics	Establishes uniform security frameworks addressing remote operational requirements without compromising protection integrity
Regulatory Alignment	Facilitates compliance demonstration through comprehensive verification mechanisms and detailed access records	Addresses core requirements across multiple regulatory frameworks through consistent protection methodologies
Internal Risk Reduction	Enforces explicit authorization requirements limiting potential misuse opportunities	Establishes accountability mechanisms through comprehensive activity monitoring throughout sensitive operations
Boundary Transcendence	Creates consistent security controls extending beyond traditional network perimeters	Implements protection frameworks adaptable to evolving infrastructure models, including hybrid and multi-cloud deployments

Organizational and Integration Considerations

Effective Zero Trust implementation across multi-cloud environments requires sophisticated governance frameworks establishing clear responsibility allocations, decision-making authorities, and comprehensive oversight mechanisms throughout deployment processes (Mo, C. 2023). These organizational structures facilitate consistent security implementations while navigating integration challenges inherent within heterogeneous cloud environments, addressing provider-specific capability variations through standardized architectural approaches adaptable to diverse platforms (Martin, J. 2023). Security teams require substantial skill development across multiple technical domains, including identity management, encryption

implementation, and monitoring capabilities specific to distributed environments, creating workforce development challenges throughout implementation initiatives (Patten, D. 2024). The technical complexity necessitates executive sponsorship, establishing organizational alignment around Zero Trust principles while securing necessary resource allocations, addressing both implementation costs and ongoing operational requirements (Mo, C. 2023). Provider-specific security implementations create substantial integration challenges regarding consistent policy enforcement, requiring sophisticated interoperability approaches addressing API compatibility variations between security tools across heterogeneous environments (Martin, J. 2023). Legacy system integration presents

particularly significant challenges requiring specialized adaptation methodologies incorporating existing applications within Zero Trust frameworks without complete redevelopment, potentially necessitating transitional security architectures during migration processes (Patten, D. 2024). The organizational transformation extends beyond technical implementations to encompass cultural shifts from traditional perimeter-based security mindsets toward continuous verification approaches inherent within Zero Trust Architecture, requiring comprehensive change management strategies throughout implementation initiatives (Mo, C. 2023).

IMPLEMENTATION METHODOLOGY

Successful Zero Trust deployment necessitates comprehensive initial assessments evaluating existing security postures across distributed environments, establishing implementation baselines while identifying critical protection gaps requiring prioritized remediation (Ramachandran, R. 2023). These evaluations examine current authentication mechanisms, access control frameworks, monitoring capabilities, and encryption implementations throughout multi-cloud infrastructures, creating detailed deployment roadmaps addressing identified deficiencies through phased implementation approaches (Patten, D. 2024). Strategic asset prioritization establishes implementation sequences based on resource sensitivity, potential exposure levels, and operational criticality, enabling focused protection enhancements addressing the highest-risk environments during initial deployment phases (Ramachandran, R. 2023). The implementation methodology implements incremental control mechanisms through progressive capability deployment, establishing foundational security components before implementing advanced verification requirements throughout distributed environments. Continuous validation processes evaluate security effectiveness throughout implementation phases, utilizing structured testing methodologies examining protection capabilities against sophisticated attack vectors while

identifying potential security gaps requiring additional control implementations (Patten, D. 2024).

Domain-Specific Zero Trust Applications

Capital markets entities deploy advanced trust verification architectures addressing rigorous compliance mandates while safeguarding critical financial systems through multilayered authentication protocols extending throughout decentralized operational environments (Patten, D. 2024). Healthcare organizations implement specialized protection frameworks securing sensitive patient information across distributed care delivery networks, establishing consistent security controls addressing strict confidentiality requirements regardless of data location or transmission pathway (Ramachandran, R. 2023). Technology enterprises establish comprehensive intellectual property safeguards through granular access restrictions and continuous monitoring systems, addressing substantial value concentration within proprietary development environments through consistent verification requirements (Patten, D. 2024). Governmental entities deploy specialized classified information handling protocols through compartmentalized security frameworks, implementing strict need-to-know verification throughout distributed processing environments while maintaining operational functionality (Ramachandran, R. 2023). Industrial manufacturers integrate sophisticated security mechanisms with critical safety systems, protecting operational technology environments and addressing potential physical impact scenarios through comprehensive protection frameworks spanning traditional information technology boundaries (Patten, D. 2024). These diverse implementation contexts demonstrate the architectural adaptability of Zero Trust principles across specialized operational requirements, establishing consistent security foundations throughout heterogeneous environments while addressing industry-specific protection challenges through tailored implementation methodologies (Ramachandran, R. 2023).

Table 5: Zero Trust Architecture Application Scenarios (Martin, J. 2023)

Implementation Context	Security Objective	Operational Advantages
Enterprise Resource Protection	Establish comprehensive safeguards across information assets, application systems, and network infrastructure	Creates unified security frameworks addressing diverse resource types through consistent verification requirements
Distributed Access	Implement secure connection	Replaces traditional perimeter-focused

Security	pathways for remote operational requirements, accessing both on-premises and cloud-based resources	models with identity-centric verification regardless of connection origin
Internal Threat Mitigation	Identify potentially malicious activities from authorized users through behavioral analysis and access pattern monitoring	Limits damage potential through continuous verification requirements and granular permission restrictions
Remote Connectivity Enhancement	Establish sophisticated access controls transcending traditional VPN limitations through identity-centric security models	Provides improved user experience while maintaining comprehensive security through targeted application access rather than network-level connections
Unauthorized Application Control	Restrict utilization of non-approved software services through comprehensive visibility and explicit authorization requirements	Reduces potential data exposure through unmanaged services while maintaining security governance throughout distributed environments
External Collaboration Security	Extend controlled access capabilities to partner organizations and customer interactions through precise permission boundaries	Facilitates necessary external engagement while maintaining strict security controls through explicit authorization frameworks
Cloud Environment Management	Implement consistent security controls throughout containerized workloads and cloud-native services	Establishes uniform protection mechanisms across ephemeral resources through automated security policy implementation
IoT Ecosystem Visibility	Create comprehensive awareness across connected device infrastructures through monitoring and access control mechanisms	Addresses security challenges inherent within expansive device deployments through consistent verification requirements

CONCLUSION

Zero Trust Architecture introduces a revolutionary security concept, particularly appropriate for multi-cloud ecosystems, directly addressing the shortcomings embedded in conventional perimeter-focused defense structures. This architectural construct methodically eliminates default trust presumptions while deploying continuous verification protocols throughout heterogeneous cloud environments. Through identity-focused security frameworks, detailed access restrictions, and extensive surveillance capabilities, institutions establish coherent defense mechanisms spanning beyond individual provider limitations. The implementation progression demands systematic preparation, technological consolidation, and organizational coordination to traverse the difficulties of managing distributed security. Network segmentation tactics combined with encryption methodologies generate multilayered protections safeguarding vital resources regardless of deployment positions across distributed cloud infrastructures. The administrative structures supporting Zero Trust deployment establish responsibility frameworks while enabling institutional transition toward verification-centered security models. Despite

persistent integration obstacles, particularly concerning compatibility and uniformity across divergent platforms, the architectural advantages considerably surpass these challenges. As distributed computing environments progressively evolve, Zero Trust Architecture delivers the structural basis for enduring security positions adaptable to developing threat vectors and technological advancements. This architectural methodology ultimately transforms multi-cloud security from disconnected provider-specific implementations toward integrated protection frameworks sustaining integrity throughout increasingly sophisticated digital ecosystems.

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