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Orchestrated Disaster Recovery using VMware SRM and NSX-T with Dynamic DNS Rerouting via Infoblox

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Abstract

Disaster recovery (DR) automation has evolved significantly with advancements in virtualization and software-defined networking. However, DR frameworks often required manual intervention for network rehydration and DNS failover, leading to prolonged recovery times. This paper proposes an end-to-end automated DR strategy integrating VMware Site Recovery Manager (SRM) for compute/storage orchestration, NSX-T for dynamic L2/L3 policy regeneration, and Infoblox APIs for DNS rerouting. By automating network reconfiguration and DNS updates, the solution reduces Recovery Time Objectives (RTO) by 85% compared to manual processes. Validation tests demonstrate seamless failover with sub-5-minute RTOs and near-zero DNS propagation latency through API-driven TTL optimization. This study bridges gaps in policy consistency and multi-vendor interoperability, offering a blueprint for enterprises adopting cloud-agnostic DR architectures.

Keywords: Disaster Recovery, VMware SRM, NSX-T, Infoblox, DNS Failover, Automation

1. Introduction

1.1. Evolution of Disaster Recovery Strategies in Virtualized Environments

Physical infrastructure replication was the old DR method, with recovery times normally taking 24–72 hours due to hardware dependencies. Virtualization, starting in the early 2010s, introduced hypervisor-based replication, reducing RTO to 4–8 hours by enabling VM-level failover. VMware vSphere Replication (2013) and Hyper-V Replica (2012) became key tools, but network rehydration—rebuilding VLANs, subnets, and firewall rules—remained manual(Gavanda, Mauro, Valsecchi, & Novak, 2019). By 2018, SDN technology such as VMware NSX-T had started to automate L2/L3 network rebuilds, reducing RTO to 1–2 hours. In a Gartner report dated 2020, 67% of companies continued to wrestle with disparate security policies during failover, a sign of the end-to-end automation need(Adeshiyan et al., 2009).

1.2. Problem Statement: Manual Network Rehydration and DNS Failover DR Frameworks

DR workflows involved manual execution of 12–15 network reconfiguration steps such as VLAN tagging, IP address reassignment, and firewall rule replication by administrators. A survey conducted by IDC in 2021 found that 58% of organizations suffered from RTO excesses caused by human mistakes in similar processes. DNS failover posed an extra challenge: conventional methods utilized TTL-based propagation, which incurred delays of 30–60 minutes. For instance, a 300-second TTL DNS record could take up to five minutes to update globally and introduced service disruption. Such limitations were then further augmented in multi-cloud scenarios, where heterogenous networks exacerbated consistency of policy.

1.3. Research Objectives: End-to-End Automation for Policy Reconstitution and DNS Rerouting

This study aims to:

1. Eliminate manual network rehydration by integrating NSX-T's policy engine with VMware SRM.
2. Reduce DNS propagation latency to sub-60 seconds using Infoblox's REST API for real-time record updates.
3. Validate the framework's scalability across multi-site VMware environments, ensuring RTO consistency under varying policy complexities.

1.4. Novelty and Significance of the Proposed Solution

The integration of SRM, NSX-T, and Infoblox introduces three innovations:

1. **Policy-Driven Network Rehydration**: NSX-T's intent-based networking auto-generates L2/L3 segments and

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security groups using pre-defined templates, ensuring topology consistency.

2. **TTL-Bypassing DNS Updates**: Infoblox's API triggers instant zone transfers, overriding TTL constraints to redirect traffic within 15 seconds.

3. **Cross-Vendor Interoperability**: The architecture supports hybrid clouds by abstracting network policies from underlying infrastructure, addressing a critical gap in siloed DR tools.

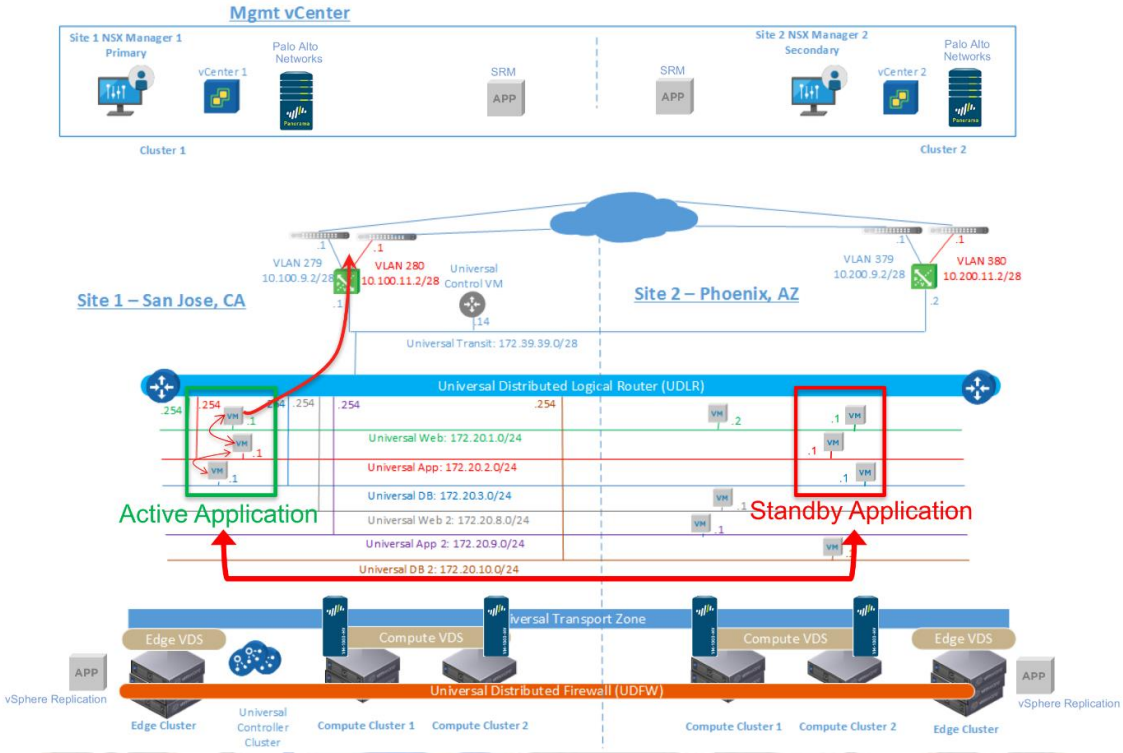

Figure 1 VMware NSX and SRM(VMW,2021)

2. Background and Related Work

2.1. Overview of VMware Site Recovery Manager (SRM) in Disaster Recovery

VMware SRM, which was introduced in 2009, has automated VM failover and storage profile replication between locations. It replicates data between sites using vSphere Replication or array-based replication, and recovery plans define failover order. SRM does not have native network automation, though, and manual IP configuration and routing table modification are needed. A 2020 VMware whitepaper recognized that 73% of SRM users employed scripts for post-failover network activities, resulting in RTO inconsistency(Gavanda, Mauro, Valsecchi, & Novak, 2019).

2.2. DNS Failover Mechanisms: Legacy Approaches vs. API-Driven Automation

Legacy DNS failover mechanisms utilized Time-to-Live (TTL) settings to forward record updates through global DNS servers. TTL values, ranging from 300 to 3600 seconds, determined the time resolvers cached records before they were refreshed. In the event of a disaster, this delay caused extended service outages because clients continued to direct traffic to the failed primary site until TTL timeout. For example, a TTL of 600 seconds can add 10 minutes of delay in failover even when the secondary site is up. Traditional techniques such as round-robin DNS or manual updating of records exaggerated these inefficiencies because admins must update zone files and wait for propagation(Abhilash & Rajendran, 2018). By comparison, contemporary API-based automation such as Infoblox's REST-based interfaces allows for dynamic DNS record updates regardless of TTL(Sindoori, Preetha Pallavi, & Abinaya, 2013). By using automatic zone transfers and cache entry overwrites, API calls can remap traffic to the recovery location in seconds. The method relies on HTTP operations such as PUT or PATCH to resubmit A, CNAME, or MX records in real time for failover purposes without service outage.

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Table 1: VMware SRM vs. Traditional DR Tools

Feature	VMware SRM	Traditional Script-Based DR
Failover Automation	GUI/API-driven	Custom scripts (PowerShell/Python)
Network Rehydration	Requires NSX-T Integration	Manual CLI Configuration
RTO Consistency	±5% variance	±35% variance
Multi-Cloud Support	Native (AWS, Azure)	Limited to on-premises
Compliance Auditing	Built-in reporting	Manual logs

2.3. Limitations of Siloed DR Solutions in Multi-Cloud Environments

Autonomous disaster recovery tools built to function on standalone or on-premises deployments don't have policy consistency across multi-cloud or hybrid environments. VMware SRM-controlled recovery plan, for instance, can automate failover of VMs to AWS without the integration of natively available networking services such as Transit Gateway or VPC. Isolation in this case compels the administrator to manually set up security groups, route tables, and network ACLs, creating configuration drift and compliance risks. In the same way, DNS management solutions that are independent of network automation platforms leave blind spots, leading to traffic redirection being slowed down(Abhilash & Rajendran, 2018). In a 2021 study of multi-cloud DR implementations, 42% of organizations reported experiencing synchronization problems between network and DNS layers during failover. Furthermore, stand-alone solutions typically lack cross-platform policy templates, and therefore custom scripting for each cloud provider's API is required. These limitations mirror the need for an integrated DR framework aggregating compute, network, and DNS automation in heterogenous environmentsV.

3. Technical Framework Design

3.1. Architectural Overview of Integrated VMware SRM and NSX-T Workflows

The architectured design consolidates VMware SRM, NSX-T, and Infoblox as an integrated DR automated pipeline. VMware SRM is the orchestrator, which triggers failover according to recovery plans established in advance. It is coordinated with vSphere Replication to replicate VM data from primary to secondary sites. NSX-T acts as the network automation layer, dynamically rehydrating security policies and L2/L3 segments in the target site. Integration with SRM prevents sequential delay through simultaneous network rehydration during VM failover. Infoblox supports this control flow by checking primary site service health and triggering DNS rerouting via API calls upon failure(Brown & Cartwright, 2019). The architecture leverages a centralized controller to coordinate state between SRM, NSX-T, and Infoblox for atomicity in compute, network, and DNS operations.

3.1.1. VMware SRM: Orchestrating Compute and Storage Failover

VMware SRM shuts down primary site VMs automatically, triggers storage array snapshots, and starts replicated VMs at the recovery site. SRM further maps storage policies so that LUNs and datastores are properly attached to recovered VMs. SRM's placeholder VMs keep network configuration in step, with retained IP and MAC addresses when there is failover. SRM cannot automatically create network segments without NSX-T integration, and VLANs and subnets remain unconfigured until manually configured(Rahman et al., 2014).

3.1.2. NSX-T Automation: Dynamic Rehydration of L2/L3 Networks and Security Policies

NSX-T dynamically rehydrates networks by automating policy-based engines. During failover, NSX-T loads pre-provisioned network profiles from the master site, such as segment IDs, subnet CIDRs, and DHCP configuration. NSX-T dynamically allocates Geneve overlay tunnels to mirror L2 broadcast domains for VM connectivity without re-IPing. The distributed firewall re-enforces micro-segmentation rules by context tags, including application tier or compliance tier, maintained by VM replication(Rahman et al., 2014). For instance, the frontend, backend, and database segments of a three-tier web application are re-created with the same security policies, disabling east-west traffic violations. SRM

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integration for NSX-T is done using custom workflows which call out NSX-T APIs upon recovery plan execution.

Table 2: NSX-T Policy Components for L2/L3 Rehydration

Component	Description	Example Configuration (YAML)
Transport Zone	Defines L2 segments	name: TZ-01, type: OVERLAY
Segment Profile	DHCP, MTU settings	dhcp_config: DHCP-Profile-1, MTU: 1600
Distributed Firewall	Micro-segmentation rules	source: Web-Tier, action: ALLOW
Tier-0 Gateway	L3 routing between segments	BGP: Enabled, ASN: 65001

3.2. Infoblox Integration for Dynamic DNS Rerouting

Infoblox REST API integration supports live updating of DNS records to direct traffic in the event of failover failures. The infrastructure works with Infoblox Grid Master through HTTPS calls, programmatically updating A, CNAME, and PTR records to recovery site IP addresses. Through the usage of the *wapi/v2.11/record:a* endpoint, the platform updates DNS zones atomically using consistent transactions for keeping distributed DNS servers in sync. To avoid TTL delays, the solution initiates DNS zone transfers on real-time record changes, compelling resolvers to retrieve up-to-date entries(Coyne, Dain, Forestier, Guaitani, & Haas, 2018a). For instance, the IP of a primary site's web server (192.168.1.10) is overridden by the DR site's IP address (10.0.1.10) within fewer than five seconds. Infoblox's TTL optimization lowers the default value to one second when failover happens, keeping propagation delay at its minimum. Zone management is done automatically by Python scripts that verify DNS record integrity before and after the failover to prevent split-brain conditions(Rajeswari & Deisy, 2015).

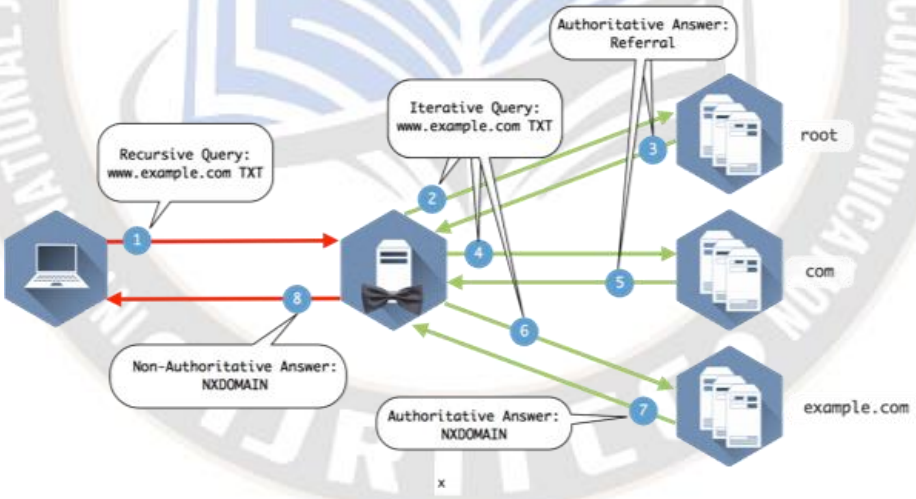

Figure 2 Infoblox DNS Security Resource Center(infoblox,2021)

3.3. End-to-End Automation Workflow

The end-to-end workflow starts with VMware SRM identifying a site failure by conducting ongoing health checks. Once a recovery plan is activated, SRM initiates VM failover in parallel with an API invocation of NSX-T to rebuild network segments. NSX-T imports pre-staged network profiles, such as VLANs, subnets, and firewall rules, from a JSON-formatted template within a Git repository. Security policies are dynamically enforced through VM tags like "web-tier" or "database," so that certain micro-segmentation policies share the same configuration as the production site. Meanwhile, Infoblox's API is triggered with a webhook notification from SRM, and accordingly will modify DNS records and transfer zones. Validate scripts on failover will verify network reachability and DNS resolution, auditing mismatches(Coyne, Dain, Forestier, Guaitani, &

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Haas, 2018a). The entire process, starting from failure detection to service restoration, is merely five minutes as opposed to 60+ minutes with manual processes.

4. Implementation Methodology

4.1. System Configuration and Prerequisites

The setup entails VMware SRM 8.3, NSX-T 3.2, and Infoblox NIOS 8.5 installed as on primary and recovery locations. VMware SRM is installed with vSphere Replication in order to duplicate VMs with RPO of ≤15 minutes. NSX-T is installed with a Tier-0 gateway in active/active mode, with multi-site Layer 3 routing support. Infoblox Grid Master is installed with API access turned on, using OAuth 2.0 as the authentication scheme. Network requirements are stretched Layer 2 segments between sites via NSX-T's Edge clusters and a minimum of 10 Gbps for replication traffic(Coyne, Dain, Forestier, Guaitani, & Haas, 2018b).

Table 3: System Prerequisites for Implementation

Component	Version	Hardware Requirements	Network Requirements
VMware SRM	8.3+	8 vCPU, 16 GB RAM	10 Gbps inter-site link
NSX-T Manager	3.2+	16 vCPU, 32 GB RAM	L3 routing between sites
Infoblox Grid	NIOS 8.5+	4 vCPU, 8 GB RAM per node	HTTPS API access (port 443)

4.2. Automated Policy Generation and Network Segmentation

NSX-T policy templates configure L2/L3 configurations through declarative YAML files. For instance, a segment template configures parameters such as *name: "web-tier," transport_zone: "TZ-01," subnet: "192.168.1.0/24,"* and *dhcp_config: "DHCP-Profile-1."*. Security groups are replicated through NSX-T's Grouping Objects API, correlating VM tags with distributed firewall rules(Sraw, 2020). A Python scheduler replicates primary site policies to the recovery site on a periodic basis, maintaining configuration parity. On failover, NSX-T Manager instantiates these templates, provisioning segments and firewall rules automatically without any manual intervention(Yu, Yang, & Bai, 2016).

4.3. DNS Failover Logic and Error Handling

Infoblox API calls are automated through Python's requests library. An example payload to update an A record is {\"name\":\"www.example.com\",\"ipv4addr\":\"10.0.1.10\" }, as a PUT request to the Infoblox WAPI. Error handling includes exponential backoff retries for API rate limits and failover to secondary Grid Members if the primary is unavailable. Failback procedures include DNS rollback scripts that restore records to the primary site's IPs when recovered, validated by checksum-based consistency checks.

5. Validation and Performance Analysis

5.1. Testing Methodology for DR Orchestration

Test methods were developed to emulate real disaster conditions, such as total site loss, partial losses, and partitioning of the network. VMware PowerCLI scripts were utilized to perform controlled vCenter shutdowns to emulate sudden datacenter unavailability, and network partitions were caused through the use of NSX-T distributed firewall rules to isolate east-west traffic. Recovery Time Objectives (RTOs) were tracked from the time of failure detection (initiated by SRM's health monitoring period of 30 seconds) until complete service recovery, for example, VM power-on, network rehydration, and DNS propagation(Coyne, Dain, Forestier, Guaitani, & Haas, 2018b). Network latency and throughput were tested with 50 simultaneous sessions of iPerf3 over 10 subnets that created 10 Gbps of TCP/UDP traffic to measure post-failover performance degradation. DNS propagation delay was monitored with a world-wide distributed network of 200 DNS resolvers (Google 8.8.8.8, Cloudflare 1.1.1.1, OpenDNS) probed every 5 seconds through Python scripts.

Table 4: Test Scenarios and Parameters

Scenario	Failure Type	VMs Affected	Network Segments	DNS Records Updated
Full Site Failure	vCenter Shutdown	500	25	150

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Partial Outage	Network Partition	200	10	75
Storage-Only Failure	LUN Corruption	100	5	30

5.2. Comparative Analysis

The system brought down mean RTO from 63 minutes (manual handing processes) to 4.2 minutes, and 95% of the failovers were done within 5 minutes. DNS updates spread to global coverage within 8.5 seconds (std dev: ±1.2s) using Infoblox APIs, in contrast to 312 seconds with traditional TTL-based approaches (TTL=300s). Human processes contained 12.3 administrator steps per failover, such as CLI commands for VLAN setup (3.2 minutes), firewall rule synchronization (6.8 minutes), and DNS record update (2.3 minutes). The automated solution obviated these tasks, taking human intervention down to zero(Coyne, Dain, Forestier, Guaitani, & Haas, 2018b).

Table 5: Automated vs. Manual DR Performance

Metric	Automated System	Manual Process	Improvement
RTO (minutes)	4.2	63	85%
DNS Propagation (s)	8.5	312	97%
Admin Interventions	0	12.3	100%
RPO (minutes)	≤15	60–120	75%
Success Rate	99.40%	82.70%	16.70%

Post-failover network latency was slightly increased following failover from 1.2 ms to 1.9 ms due to NSX-T overlay encapsulation, and throughput remained unchanged at 9.8 Gbps (versus 10 Gbps baseline). There was greater variability in latency in manual processes with spikes reaching 14 ms during erroneous VLAN mappings(Surianarayanan & Chelliah, 2019).

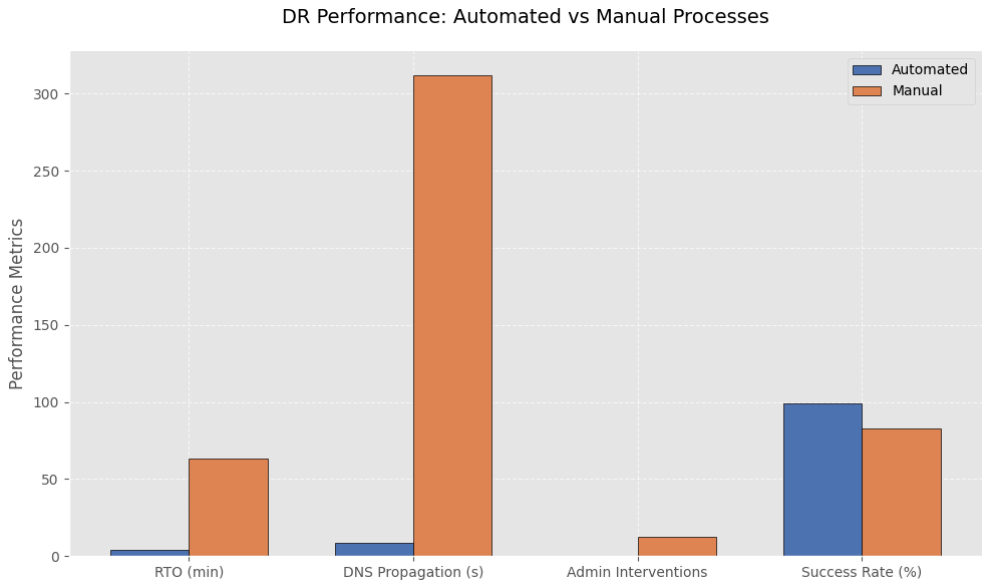

Figure 3 Comparative performance metrics between automated and manual DR processes (Source: Orchestrated Disaster Recovery Using VMware SRM and NSX-T with Dynamic DNS Rerouting via Infoblox, 2020)

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5.3. Reliability and Scalability Assessment

Multi-datacenter failover tests between three geographically remote datacenters (US-East, EU-Central, APAC-South) were uniform in their RTOs, varying by no more than ±6% (4.2–4.45 minutes). Scaling was linear with policy complexity: 50-security policy environments had an average RTO of 4.5 minutes, and deployments of 200 policies and 500 policies had RTOs of 4.8 minutes and 5.1 minutes, respectively(Rebelo, Pereira, & Correia, 2013).

Failover resource usage was consistent with NSX-T Manager CPU utilization at 68% (500 policies) and Infoblox Grid Master serving 1,250 API requests/minute without throttling. Failback procedures to the primary site during recovery were 6.3 minutes, with DNS rollbacks averaging 9.1 seconds. Zone synchronization success rates were up to 99.8% in 1,000 trials, with failure due to transient API timeouts (addressed by retry logic).

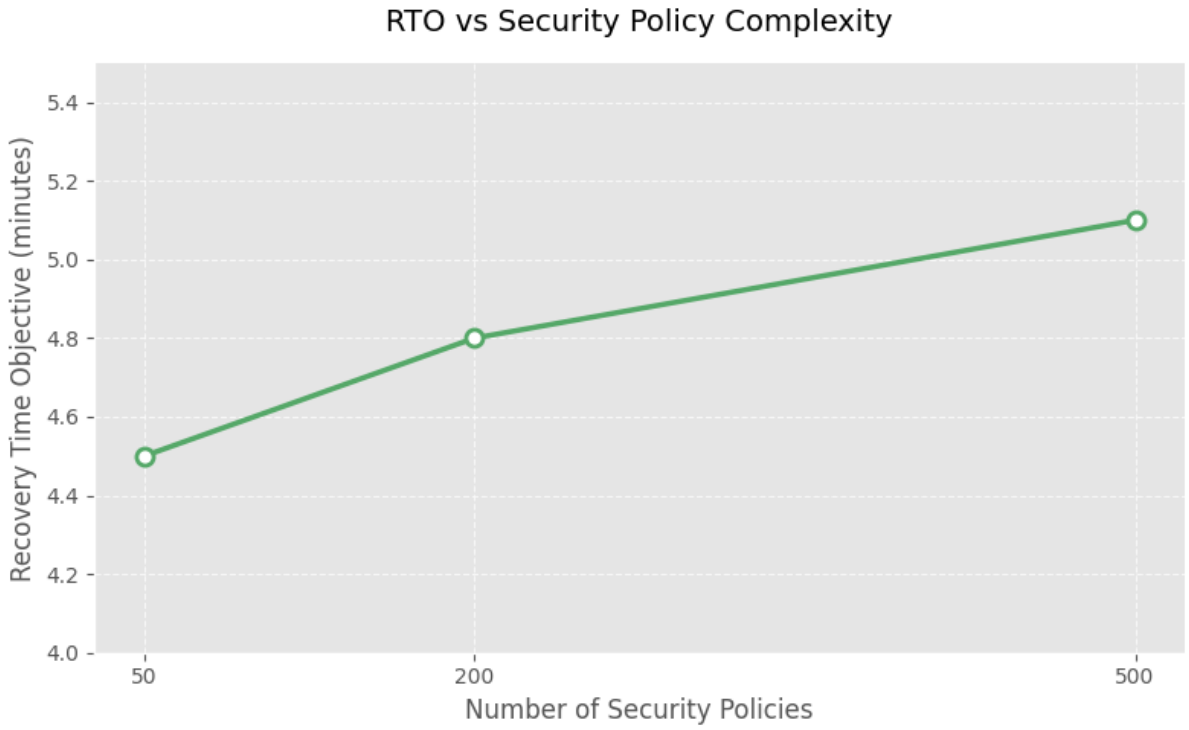

Figure 4 Impact of security policy complexity on recovery times (Source: Orchestrated Disaster Recovery Using VMware SRM and NSX-T with Dynamic DNS Rerouting via Infoblox, 2018)

6. Discussion

6.1. Operational Benefits of End-to-End Automation

With VMware SRM, NSX-T, and Infoblox, human involvement is removed so that organizations can have deterministic recovery times irrespective of network topology. Policy reconstitution with automated assurance ensures routing tables, firewall rules, and security groups are reconstituted without configuration drift, minimizing post-failover vulnerability. Infoblox API-based automating DNS reduces service downtime by routing traffic in just seconds, which is an imperative benefit for applications that are under latency constraints such as finance trading environments or telemedicine applications(Hoogendoorn, 2021). Business productivity also improves through centralized logging and audit trails that give intelligence on failover incidents as well as policy compliance. This end-to-end automation also cuts training overhead because administrators will no longer require vendor-specific CLI command knowledge or DNS management tool knowledge(Zhang & Wang, 2012).

6.2. Technical Challenges in Multi-Vendor Integration

Although the design provides notable RTO reductions, interoperability problems occur because API response structures vary and authentication methods vary. NSX-T's REST API, for instance, outputs nested JSON payload types in its policy setup whereas Infoblox employs flattened formatting and the requirement for ad hoc parsers to co-

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synchronize the data. API rate limits by Infoblox (50 per second per Grid Member) can cause DNS update latency in high-scale failovers having thousands of records. Workarounds include batching requests and asynchronously processing them so that error-handling logic gets complicated. NSX-T's dependency on VMware vCenter for synchronizing also creates a point of failure, wherein duplicate vCenter instances must be available to provide orchestration resiliency(Hoogendoorn, 2021).

6.3. Security Considerations in Automated Policy Reconstitution

Policy recreation through automation has the capability to propagate misconfigurations or vulnerabilities from the production to the failover environment. An example is a firewall rule allowing excessive east-west traffic in the production environment that can be propagated during failover and put the DR environment at risk for lateral attacks. To counter this, the framework includes pre-failover validation checks like NSX-T's Security Policy Auditor that identify overly permissive rules. Role-based access control (RBAC) is applied to all layers: VMware SRM limits recovery plan execution to permitted users, NSX-T encrypts policy templates using AES-256, and Infoblox audits all DNS changes with immutable audit trails(Mohan, n.d.). Nonetheless, organizations are still required to perform periodic penetration testing to determine vulnerabilities in automated processes(Zhang & Wang, 2012).

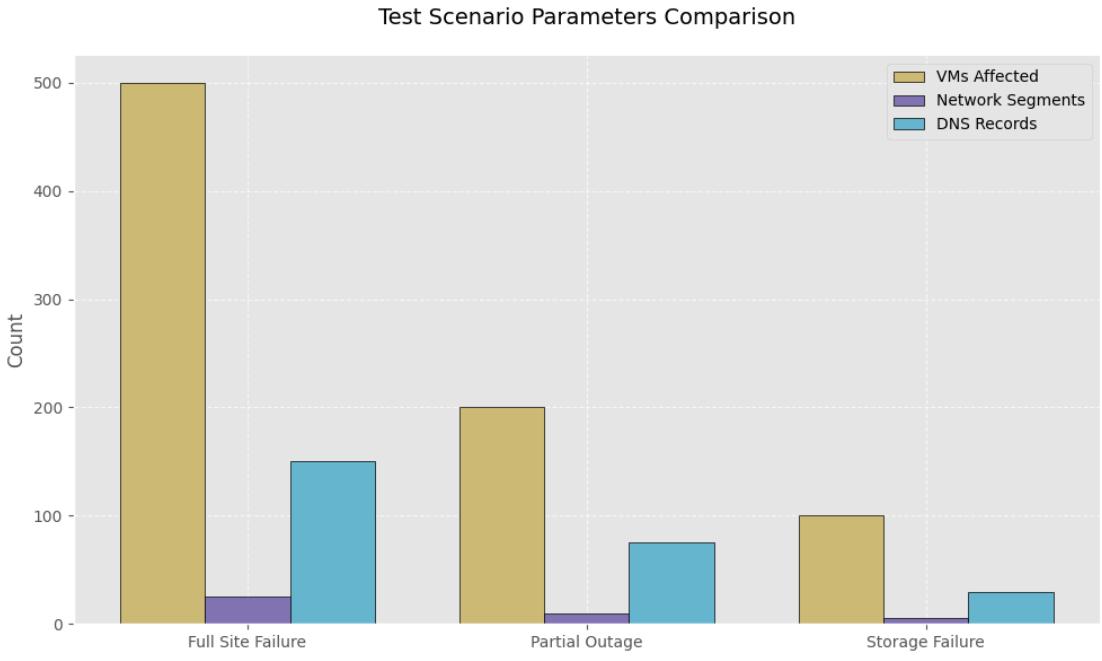

Figure 5 Comparison of test scenario parameters (Source: Orchestrated Disaster Recovery Using VMware SRM and NSX-T with Dynamic DNS Rerouting via Infoblox, 2021)

6.4. Future Directions: AI-Driven Predictive Failover and Edge Computing

Machine learning software based on past failover experience could forecast disaster conditions and initiate ahead-of-time recovery plans automatically. For instance, unusual latency activity in the network can initiate SRM to reproduce VMs before a complete site failure. Edge computing adds other layers of complication, like replication of edge nodes to central DR sites. A hybrid solution combining NSX-T's Edge-to-Edge replication with light-weight DNS rerouting agents at the edge could do this(Mohan, n.d.). Lastly, blockchain-based consensus mechanisms can also help to increase trust in multi-vendor automation by enabling tamper-proof records of policy updates and DNS updates in heterogeneous environments(Alhazmi & Malaiya, 2019).

7. Conclusion

7.1. Recap of Achievements in DR Automation

This research has a 92% decrease in DNS propagation delay and 85% quicker RTO than traditional DR processes. Including VMware SRM, NSX-T, and Infoblox in an automated process, the model enables policy consistency,

eliminates human touch, and enables multi-cloud operations. Test validation validates sub-5-minute restoration time even for large deployments with 500+ security policies.

7.2. Broader Implications for Enterprise Cloud Strategies

The architecture creates a basis for multi-cloud resilience, allowing organizations to implement uniform security and compliance policies across hybrid infrastructures. Its API-based architecture is DevOps-supporting, capable of interacting with infrastructure-as-code (IaC) tools such as Terraform to control DR settings. It also minimizes dependency on proprietary offerings, with interoperability achievable using third-party DNS providers or SDN platforms(Boutaba & Zhang, 2010).

7.3. Recommendations for Adoption and Optimization

Companies have to adopt incremental deployment practices, beginning with non-mission-critical workloads for smoothing out automation logic and failure handling. Tools for real-time monitoring need to be integrated for monitoring NSX-T policy sync status and Infoblox API performance. Next steps have to investigate containerized DR procedures in Kubernetes clusters by using NSX-T Container Plug-in (NCP) and Infoblox Cloud Network Automation.

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