

VOLTAIC : Volume Optimization Layer To Assign Cloud resources

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Abstract—Cloud computing offers on-demand access to computational resources. One of the major challenges in cloud environments is to enforce the elasticity of the processes that execute in the cloud, avoiding Service Level Agreements (SLAs) violations and reducing waste with idle resources. We propose an autonomic resource management system for cloud computing, called VOLTAIC (Volume Optimization Layer To Assign Cloud resources). The proposal analyzes usage profiles of physical and virtual elements and defines heuristics based on differential utilization level that guarantee an optimized allocation of virtual elements. VOLTAIC introduces algorithms to determine proper parameters to allocate cloud elements and to automatically migrate those elements to avoid performance degradation due to server saturation. Results obtained through the implementation of the system in a small-scale cluster show that the system efficiently assigns virtual elements and ensures proper resource allocation to virtual elements. We also developed a virtual network simulator for cloud environments to attest the applicability of VOLTAIC in broader scenarios. Results show reductions in up to 10% in the amount of idle cycles due to correct assignment of virtual elements.

I. INTRODUCTION

Cloud computing introduces a new provisioning model for technology infrastructure. In this model, clients hire providers that dynamically offer processor, memory, disk, and network resources. This can be achieved through the use of the virtualization technology [1], which implements a hardware abstraction that enhances the flexibility of resource allocation. This flexibility confers elasticity in the cloud environment, defined as the capacity of providing resources on-demand and at the same time ensuring Quality of Service (QoS) of clients [2]. Service providers must develop efficient cloud systems to avoid the waste with idle resources, ensure QoS and fulfill dynamic workload demands. Armbrust *et al.* [3] claim that the main cloud challenges are the service availability and the elastic resource provision that scales with the demand and reduces costs without violating Service Level Agreements (SLA).

Virtualization allows on-demand remapping of virtual resources over physical resources and thus enables the adaptation of systems to dynamic workloads. This remapping primitive is defined as migration and allows workload transfers among different physical machines without interrupting their execution. Currently, migration is manually triggered by network managers to load balance data centers. This reallocation scheme is inefficient because of its high reaction time, which

is inadequate to dynamic workload environments like clouds. The autonomic migration is an even greater challenge, because there is a need to consider multiple parameters of the current machines and to estimate future resource demands of machines.

In this article, we propose VOLTAIC, which performs autonomic migrations to provide elasticity in the resource provisioning of a cloud environment, guaranteeing QoS for the clients and enhancing the usage of available resources. Through the profile analysis of virtual and physical elements, the system performs a dynamic allocation of elements. The utilization profiles of virtual elements are compared among themselves and among the profiles of resources offered by the physical machines. VOLTAIC searches the most adequate physical server to each virtual element by considering the likelihood between the profile of the virtual element and the profile offered by the physical server.

VOLTAIC was implemented and tested in a real environment and uses Libvirt API [4]. Thus, VOLTAIC is applicable to all virtualization platforms that supports Libvirt, such as Xen [5], VMWare [6], KVM [7], etc. In order to validate the proposed system in large scale environments, we developed a cloud environment simulator. The simulator receives utilization profiles of real machines and generates outputs that validate the modeling for the proposed scenario. The obtained results show that VOLTAIC is efficient for elasticity provision and enhances the availability of resources. The proposal reduces in up to 10% the denial rate of processor resources when compared to proposals of the literature.

The article is structured as follows. Section II presents the related work, which aims in management of cloud environments and migration of virtual elements. Section III shows the proposed architecture, its behavior and the proposed algorithms. Section IV and Section V shows the implementation of VOLTAIC, the development of the simulator and the results. of the proposal. Finally, Section VI presents the conclusions and future directions of this work.

II. RELATED WORK

The development of mechanisms that ensure elasticity in resource provision is a big challenge. There are many works that address the virtual element allocation in physical substrates, but the major part of the proposals focuses on the admission control of virtual elements and ignore the resource

consumption variability that requires dynamic re-allocations. Fajjari *et al.* developed an admission system based on ant colony meta-heuristics to solve this kind of problem [8]. Alkmin *et al.* developed mapping algorithms that minimizes the resource utilization in virtual network environments [9].

SandPiper [10] is a system that monitors virtual machines and detects physical machine hotspot to avoid them. Hotspots are physical machines that are close to full resource saturation. SandPiper monitors virtual machines in Xen virtualization platform and uses prediction equations to estimate hotspots. In order to detect hotspots, SandPiper uses an iterative algorithm that orders all physical machines as a function of their volumes, defined as

$$Vol = 1/(1 - cpu) \cdot 1/(1 - mem) \cdot 1/(1 - net), \quad (1)$$

which is a value that represents the volume of used resources as a function of processor, memory and network. After the ordering procedure, the algorithm classifies, within each machine, the virtual elements that use more resources. Then, the system iteratively reallocates the virtual elements that belong to higher volume machines into lower volume machines, until all hotspots are mitigated. The resource allocation of VOLTAIC is significantly different from SandPiper because it takes into consideration the compatibility of the usage similarity of physical and virtual machines. Besides, our proposal uses a more complete volume metric that takes into account other parameters. The new parameters indicate the need to execute management algorithms before the environment reaches critical situations. VOLTAIC also allows the utilization of an adaptation of the punishment algorithm proposed by Carvalho *et al.* to enforce that VOLTAIC algorithms can achieve enough processing power to fulfill its objectives [11].

Gong *et al.* propose Press, a lightweight prediction system that takes into account Fast Fourier Transformations (FFTs) and Markov chains to predict the resource demand of virtual resources [12]. Press was developed to work with Xen systems and was tested with samples obtained from processor clusters of Google. The system shows good prediction results, detecting the need to perform migration of virtual elements. An important contribution is the utilization of signatures that uses the variance of machine profiles in time as a metric to know the reliability of the profiles to estimate future demands. Press presents good results in prediction but does not implement automatic relocation algorithms.

Houidi *et al.* propose an adaptive mechanism to provide resources in virtual network environments [13]. Authors take into account network restrictions such as topology limitations and SLA constraints to enhance network performance and enhance tolerance to failures.

We have proposed propose SLAPv, an adaptive control mechanism for virtual network environments [11]. The proposal is based on adaptive punishments applied to virtual elements to enforce SLAs and provide a better utilization of idle resources. SLAPv verifies if virtual machines violate the contracted SLAs and is limited to the distribution of resources within a single physical node. Another contribution is the adoption of a fuzzy metric to verify the saturation

level of physical resource on each physical node, defined as system charge. The system charge reflects parameters such as processor usage, memory and network.

In this paper, we propose VOLTAIC system that is an autonomous resource manager for cloud environments, which allocates virtual elements, enhances the QoS offered to clients and avoids the waste of computational resources. The system charge metric used in our SLAPv proposal was adapted into VOLTAIC as a criterion to execute dynamic allocation mechanisms. VOLTAIC allows resource management in a broader level, because it allows the utilization of the migration primitive to enhance the resource provision for virtual elements. The system uses `libvirt` to interact with virtualization platforms and manage physical machines. Thus, VOLTAIC is compatible with any virtualization platform that supports `libvirt`, such as Xen, VMWare, KVM, etc., differently from existent proposals that works only with specific virtualization environments [10], [11], [12]. By adopting the utilization of a single interface to manage virtual platforms, we can augment the applicability of the proposed system, but it inherits some problems related to which information can be extracted by each platform due to `libvirt` limitations. Besides, results show that the absence of some platforms-specific information does not affect the performance of the proposal. We must also mention that the platforms must provide live migration mechanisms as well.

III. THE VOLTAIC SYSTEM

The name VOLTAIC is inspired in nature, where electrical charge differences induce charge exchange through voltaic arcs. In the same way real clouds balance electrical charges among each other, the proposed VOLTAIC system balances resource consumption in cloud computing environments. The autonomic management is characterized as a process of observation and decision making in the proposed environment, without human intervention. Therefore, the autonomic manager perceives the behavior of physical and virtual machines, analyzes and predict possible saturation situations, and makes decisions. These decisions can encompass the temporary resource pruning [11] and live migration of virtual elements [14].

The system is composed of three main modules. The first module is the Statistic Collector (SC), which interacts with `libvirt`, retrieves the monitoring statistics of each physical machine, and stores this information in a database. The second module is the Profile Analyzer (PA), which uses the information collected and stored by the Statistic Collector to extract knowledge from the virtualization platforms. This knowledge comprises utilization profiles of virtual elements, offered profiles (OPs) of physical machines, system charge, and the mapping of virtual elements in physical elements. The third module is the Orchestrator (OC) that uses the knowledge acquired by the Profile Analyzer to manage physical and virtual machines. It controls the amount of resources that are offered to each virtual machine and organizes virtual element migrations to balance the resource distribution.

A. VOLTAIC Architecture

The system uses a management model in which a physical machine (PM) configured with a VOLTAIC module manages a given set of physical machines, as seen in Fig. 1. VOLTAIC manages this set of machines, controls the offered resources, and dynamically migrates virtual elements, avoiding resource saturation. If a set of PMs is inside a single administrative domain, it is possible to enable interaction among them, with resource announcements and requisitions. Hence, we extend the system capability, offering resources to virtual elements under domain of other VOLTAIC machines, improving resource utilization and enhancing the provided services.

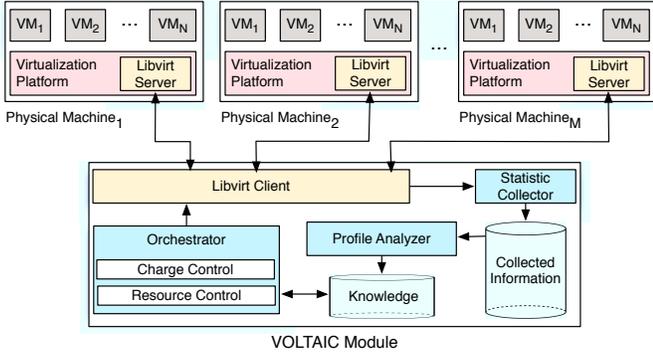


Figure 1. A VOLTAIC module managing a set of physical machines and orchestrating the resource allocation.

B. The Statistic Collector Module

The Statistic Collector (SC) module uses `libvirt` to interact with the physical machines and retrieves monitoring information. The SC retrieves processor utilization, allocated memory and network utilization of physical machines and virtual elements. We can adjust the sampling frequency, avoiding that well defined events synchronizes with times of inactivity in SC retrieval process. The sampling frequency is correlated with the reaction time of the system.

C. The Profile Analyzer Module

The Profile Analyzer (PA) module process information acquired by the Statistic Collector. The analysis involves the collection of information regarding the mapping of virtual elements into each physical element and the generation of time series, which reflect the relationship between resource consumption and time. VOLTAIC generates profiles based on cumulative distribution functions (CDFs) and probability density functions (PDFs). These functions allow the estimation of future resource demands of each machine and allows the estimation of a given element be served in a given physical machine. This kind of analysis is based on Sandpiper [10]. Besides the utilization profile, physical machines also possess an offered profile (OP), which represents the profile of availability of resources. This profile is then processed when there is a need to select the proper physical machine to serve a given virtual machine that needs to be migrated.

Based on the profiles and time series, the Profile Analyzer generates a metric defined as system charge. This metric

is generated according to Carvalho *et al.* and represents a nebulous conjunction among multiple system variables, such as processor utilization, memory, network and current system temperature [11]. Therefore, system managers can model which parameters are the most important in the system charge and how the variation of parameters influences the decision making scheme. Through this metric and its time variation, the system detects physical machines that are close to saturation. By detecting this risk, VOLTAIC pro-actively eliminates the problem through dynamic reallocation of virtual elements.

D. The Orchestrator Module

The Orchestrator is the main module of VOLTAIC. It is responsible for decision making and for machine management. The decision is based on the execution of charge and resource control algorithms. The charge control algorithm examines the variability of the charge of physical systems and detects bottlenecks in resource offering that generates losses. If the average load of the last samples extrapolates a given security threshold, the load control algorithm begins the reallocation procedures. The resource control algorithm allows the system to estimate future resource consumptions and decides the best allocation for each virtual element.

1) *Resource Allocation Algorithms*: The load control algorithm monitors the load of physical systems and detect if a given physical machine sustained an average load that exceeds a security threshold for a predefined time period. If this happens, migration algorithms are triggered. In the implementation and in the simulation, this period comprises the last five system charge measurements. The security limit was defined as 0.80. This limit can assume values in interval $[0, 1]$, which is the range of values that can be assumed by the system load. The critical machine selection algorithm sorts physical machines as a function of their system loads and the amount of critical virtual machines on each physical machine.

```

input : SysChargeList[ ], VLimit
output: PmMigrationCandidates
PmMigrationCandidates = [ ];
for PM ∈ SysChargeList do
    VirtualCriticalNumber = 0;
    for VM ∈ PM do
        critic = criticality(VM, VLimit);
        if critic[0] == True then
            VirtualCriticalNumber += 1;
        end
    end
    Info = (MF, VirtualCriticalNumber) result =
        PmMigrationCandidates.append(Info);
end
sortByCriticalVMs(result);

```

Algorithm 1: Selection of critical physical machines.

Critical virtual machines are those allocated on saturated physical systems and that are responsible for an amount of the system load that is higher than a predetermined limit and which profile variations in time demonstrate low correlation.

The profile variation in time is a reflex of the probability that the virtual machine possesses a predictable behavior. If a virtual machine shows high correlation among consecutive profiles, this indicates that this vm has higher chances of behaving in the same way in near future. Otherwise, the machine shows unstable behavior and the proposed algorithm aims to allocate it in another physical machine to avoid the disturbance of well-behaved machines that share the same physical resources. The algorithm can be seen in Alg. 1. In the algorithm, the `Vlimit` input means the established threshold for virtual machines. There, the `criticality()` function evaluates the contribution of the virtual machine in the total load of the physical machine which hosts it and the profile variability of the virtual machine. Criticality is defined as

$$criticality = \alpha \cdot [v.charge] + (1 - \alpha) \cdot [abs(\rho)] \quad (2)$$

and establishes a relation of the impact of the virtual machine in the physical machine and the correlation of adjacent profiles of the same machine. The machine profile is stored as a sliding window of fixed length. In our experiments, α was set as 0.5, which means that the equal weight is given to both charge and correlation. After the evaluation of criticality, the function returns a tuple with the criticality value and a boolean value which indicates if this value violates the established threshold.

The `sortByCriticalVMs()` function groups physical machines with similar charge values and sort this groups in function of the number of critical virtual machines in each of them. Therefore, the first returned elements represent machines with higher charge and more critical virtual machines.

After this procedure, VOLTAIC executes the virtual machine migration selection algorithm. This algorithm, seen in Alg. 2, iterates over physical machine candidates. For each candidate, the algorithm observes if the recent consumption profile and its correlation between the profile and the offered profile (OP) of physical machines, sorted from lower to higher charge. The adopted correlation method is the Pearson correlation, which is obtained by dividing the covariance by the product of standard deviation of two variables. If the profile is correlated and the average consumption of the virtual machine is smaller than the one offered by the physical machine, the virtual machine is migrated. Otherwise, the next virtual machine is analyzed.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION AND SIMULATION

VOLTAIC is implemented in Python and uses *python-libvirt* for virtualization platform communication.

In order to test a broad range of parameters and perform migration tests in larger scale, we also developed a discrete event simulator for virtual environments. The simulator is developed in python and allows the configuration of physical and virtual machines. The simulator¹ offers creation, destruction, migration, and event scheduling primitives. Each execution step represents a unit of simulation time. The main classes of the simulator are detailed below.

¹The simulator is available for download and can be found in <http://www.gta.ufrj.br/~hugo/virtsim/>.

```

input : PmMigrationCandidates[ ], Plimit, Vlimit
output: VmMigrationCandidates[ ]
VmMigrationCandidates = [ ];
for PM ∈ PmsMigrationCandidates do
  if PM.charge ≥ Plimit then
    for VM ∈ PM do
      distribution = getDist(VM);
      if criticality(VM, Vlimit)[0] == True
        then
          info = (distribution, VM, PM);
          VmMigrationCandidates.append(info);
        end
      end
    end
  end
VmMigrationCandidates.sort(reverse = True);

```

Algorithm 2: Selection of migration candidates.

A. Physical Machines

The physical machines entities are similar to real machines. We define the maximum processor capacity, memory, and network resources that is offered on each simulation step and also we associate virtual machines to physical machines. The implementation also simulates a generic virtualization platform, which allows the utilization of virtualization primitives (creation, destruction, and migration), and also the implementation of different resource schedulers. The simulator user adds costs to perform the primitives and schedule tasks.

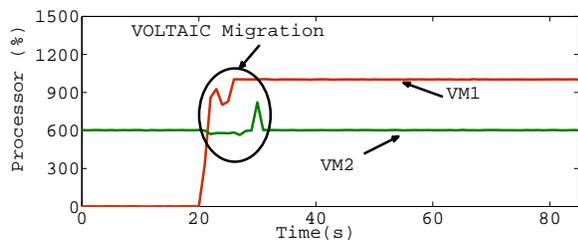
The implemented processor scheduler makes a fair resource distribution among virtual machines (proportional division). For instance, if the physical machine only provides 100 processing units per step and two machines try to use 100 units each, each machine receives only 50 processing units and the simulator stores that virtual machines lost resources in this interaction, in this case, each machine achieved a loss of 50 processing units.

B. Virtual Machines

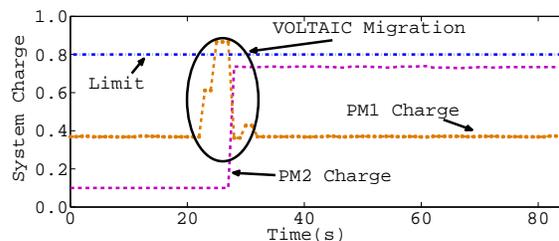
Virtual machine entities inherit characteristics from physical machine entities, but there is no implementation of the virtualization platform. We define processor, memory, and network thresholds. Besides, the virtual machine entity allows the utilization of customized profiles for each resource, enabling the injection of real resource consumption patterns in the simulator to see the VOLTAIC reaction to it. We can also opt for distribution functions to generate machine profiles. In this manner, given that the developer possesses knowledge of the types of virtual machines that will be deployed in real scenarios, it is possible to simulate access patterns even without the existence of real profiles.

C. VOLTAIC and the Simulation Manager

In simulation, VOLTAIC possesses its own entity, capable of interacting with physical and virtual machines. VOLTAIC allows the execution of the monitoring tasks, migration algorithms, and migration candidate selection algorithms. This



(a) Processing variation as function of time.



(b) System charge variation.

Figure 2. Autonomic migration. VOLTAIC detects sustained system charge values and migrates a virtual machine to a machine with lower load.

interaction is accomplished through the simulation manager. The simulation manager coordinates all simulation activities. We can define the number of simulation rounds and the number of steps for each round. The simulation manager also helps the system to perform migrations, by invoking sending and reception methods on each physical machine. At the end of the execution, we can generate a log of all operations and procedures that were taken during the simulation.

V. RESULTS

The implementation and simulation results were obtained in two identical physical machines (PM1 and PM2), connected by Intel 82599EB 10 Gbps cards through an optic fiber. The servers have two Intel Xeon X5570 processors, with a total of 16 physical cores and 24 GB of DDR3 1066 MHz memory. The virtualization platform that was used was KVM and the libvirt version was 0.9.6.

The test methodology follows the evolution of VOLTAIC system, with the intention to demonstrate the validity of each step of the development of the proposal. Initially, we perform tests that demonstrate the proper working of the proposal when it is implemented in a real environment. We capture real utilization profiles from this scenario. The simulator is then fed with the real scenario information, such as the estimated migration time and the resource utilization profiles. Next, we test the behavior of the simulator when it is subjected to real profiles. We observe that the simulator shows a behavior that is equal to the real system implementation. After that, we simulate environments with higher number of virtual and physical machines, to evaluate the performance of the system and the resource allocation schemes in broader scenarios.

In the first implementation test, we created two virtual machines. Each virtual machine receives processing tasks and uses up to 16 of the available cores. If the physical machine cannot provide enough processing, virtual machines suffer from utilization capability reduction until there are enough resources available.

In Fig. 2(a), we observe the processor utilization of two virtual machines (VM1 and VM2) during time. The processing scale represents the total utilization of processor resources, which varies from zero to 1.600%, which represents the full utilization of all the 16 available cores. Initially the two virtual machines are allocated in physical machine 1. We can see that in the instant $t=20$ seconds VM1 receives an intensive processing task, which elevates its processor utilization from

0% to 1.000%. In this situation, the physical machine is totally saturated and even a small positive variation of processor usage can generate performance losses. VOLTAIC detects the augment in the processor demand and opts for automatically migrate VM1, which is the virtual machine that shows higher probability of saturating PM1 to PM2, to fairly distribute the charge among physical machines, as seen in Fig. 2(b). Therefore, VOLTAIC relocates virtual machines according to the physical machines that can provide the resource profile which is the most compatible with each virtual machine.

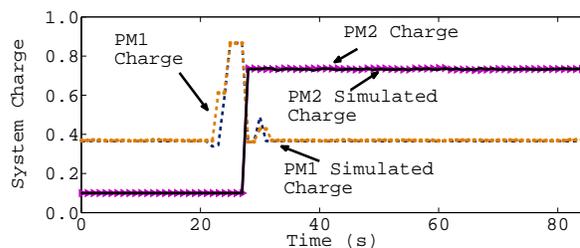
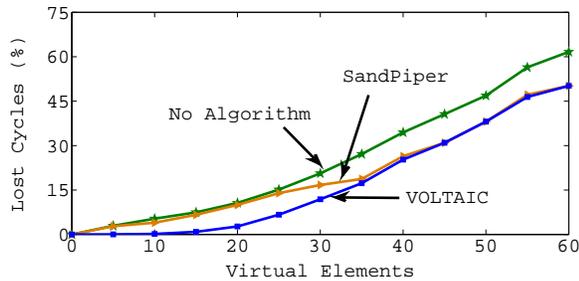


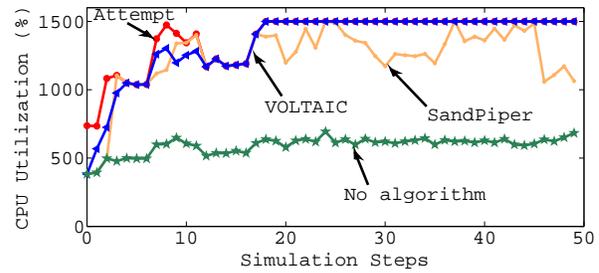
Figure 3. Equivalence between simulation and implementation.

To enhance the scale of tests, we developed a virtual environment simulator. To validate the simulator, the same utilization profile from Fig. 2(a) and the physical machines configurations were reproduced in the simulator and we observed the system charge variation. Results show that for the same real charge, the simulator shows the same behavior in processor variation and in system charge variation, as seen in Fig. 3. The simulation steps were associated to the time in seconds of the real system execution.

To demonstrate VOLTAIC, the simulator was loaded with virtual machines with processor utilization profiles that follows a normalized distribution centered in 200% of processor utilization. Each virtual machine is configured with 256 MB of RAM memory and this amount is fixed for all machines. In the simulations, we do not consider the utilization of network interfaces. In the beginning of each simulation round the initial allocation of each virtual machine is modified and we verify the amount of lost processing cycles in the system. The lost cycles are related to simulation steps in which resource demand is higher than the current configuration of the system can provide. In this case, virtual machines cannot have its demands fulfilled. After the simulation, we make a statistical analysis of data and compare the amount of lost resources when compared with the same environment condition with SandPiper and without autonomic migration algorithms.



(a) Lost cycles in function of the number of virtual machines.



(b) Offered CPU for a given virtual machine.

Figure 4. CPU utilization in details. VOLTAIC Outperforms SandPiper and the execution with no algorithms in the CPU provisioning.

The results seen in Fig. 4(a) show the amount of processing cycles that were lost in function of the number of virtual machines allocated in the physical machines. These results were obtained in the execution of five rounds of 100 simulation steps and we simulated 10 physical machines. The results show that VOLTAIC reduces que amount of lost cycles in more than 10%. We can observe that until the number of virtual machines reaches 35, the proposal presents better results than SandPiper. This occurs mainly because the selection criterion of critical machines takes into account the correlation of the virtual machine profiles and the criticality of virtual machines. As the number of virtual machines increases, the physical machines became more saturated and eventually all of them are classified as critical. If this happens, the priority heuristic that chooses less stable machines and searches for adequate reception profiles became an algorithm that takes into account only the system charge, because all physical machines present saturation symptoms and critical machines. Even in these conditions, the system reduces the lost cycles in 10% when compared to the results that use no algorithms.

In Fig. 4(b), we verify the analysis of a random virtual machine in one of the execution rounds of the tests. We can verify the processor consumption attempt, and the processor consumption offered by VOLTAIC, SandPiper, and in the absence of reallocation algorithms. Our proposal, as time evolves, learns the behavior of virtual machines and selects a better placement for it. After 18 simulation steps, VOLTAIC found out the physical machine that better suits the virtual machine and ensure proper resource allocation for it.

VI. CONCLUSION

Quality of Service and elasticity provision are a great challenge for cloud computing. Efficient resource allocation is fundamental for scalability of this computation model. We propose the VOLTAIC that is an efficient system to dynamically reallocate virtual elements in physical machines. VOLTAIC analyzes utilization profiles and, based on usage correlations, reduces the amount of wasted processor cycles during normal and saturated scenarios.

The proposed heuristics predict saturation situations and trigger migration algorithms. The algorithms detect and select the physical machines that are closer to saturation and find the best candidates for machine migration. Results show that the proposed migration algorithms reduce in up to 10% the failure

rate in the offering of processor resources. Therefore, the results show that the proposal performs well for the analyzed data center scenarios, maximizing the amount of instantiated virtual machines, ensuring the fulfillment of services, avoiding resource waste, and enhancing the profit of providers.

Besides the dynamic allocation proposal, this article brings as a contribution an implementation of a virtual environment simulator. This simulator allows the instantiation of virtual elements and virtualization platforms. The profile of the virtual elements can be loaded from real traces. Finally, the simulator is extensible and allows the development of new schedulers and virtualization proposals. As a future work, we intend to extend the simulator and to implement new heuristics to dynamically allocate resources in cloud computing environments.

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