

Intelligent Orchestration of Large-Scale Infrastructure Migrations in Distributed Cloud Environments

Sanjay Singh

LinkedIn Corporation, Mountain View, CA, USA. ORCID: 0009-0007-7953-2083

Abstract: Large-scale infrastructure migration in distributed cloud environments has shifted from a bounded, calendar-driven project into a continuous engineering discipline, and the orchestration platforms that support it must be architected for that reality rather than for a single cutover event. This article examines how intelligent orchestration platforms coordinate complex, large-scale infrastructure migrations, with attention to workflow-driven execution, dependency-aware sequencing, and the reliability mechanisms that keep migration programs safe as they scale. The analysis argues that no single mechanism, durable workflow execution, dependency sequencing, progressive rollout, or automated rollback, is sufficient on its own to make large-scale migration safe. Each addresses a distinct category of operational risk, and platforms that implement these mechanisms in isolation tend to reproduce the very fragility they were intended to eliminate. The article develops a structural account of how these previously separate capabilities compose into a single orchestration discipline that is purpose-built for infrastructure migration, where the focus is on moving an entire operational system rather than an individual application deployment. Particular attention is given to the role of continuous validation, embedded throughout execution rather than confined to a migration's beginning and end, and to reliability practices such as progressive execution and chaos-informed fault testing that allow risk to be surfaced while its consequences remain small. The discussion closes with practical implications for infrastructure teams planning migration programs at distributed scale, along with a forward look at how policy-driven automation and intent-based infrastructure management are likely to reshape migration orchestration going forward. The contribution offered is architectural rather than empirical, intended to inform how organizations structure the platforms responsible for their ongoing infrastructure evolution.

Keywords: Infrastructure migration; distributed systems; workflow orchestration; cloud computing; fault tolerance; service reliability

1. Introduction

1.1 The Shift from Migration Events to Continuous Infrastructure Evolution

The calendar-bound migration project, a scheduled cutover weekend followed by a return to steady state, no longer describes how distributed organizations actually relocate infrastructure. Applications, services, and workloads move across compute platforms on a rolling basis now, driven not by a single deadline but by capacity rebalancing, security modernization, and platform evolution that never fully pause. Workload movement has become a persistent stream that must coexist with live production traffic and interdependent services never designed with relocation in mind, rather than an isolated event bracketed by a maintenance window.

Responsibility for a migration orchestration platform expands accordingly. Scripting a sequence of provisioning and cutover steps to be run once is no longer adequate. At distributed scale, an orchestration layer has to reason about dependency graphs that shift as services are added and retired; tolerate partial failure without stalling the broader program; and give operators continuous visibility into program status rather than a single terminal pass or fail signal.



There is an organizational consequence to this shift that is easy to overlook. Migration tooling built for one initiative and discarded afterward cannot coordinate continuous infrastructure evolution. Platforms capable of that coordination, they need to persist as standing infrastructure, versioned and operated with the same rigor as the production systems they relocate. Treating orchestration tooling as disposable scaffolding is a structural mistake this article observes repeatedly in organizations whose migration activity outpaces the maturity of their coordination tooling.

1.2 Scope and Research Question

How intelligent orchestration platforms coordinate large-scale infrastructure migrations across distributed cloud environments is the subject of this article, with particular attention to workflow-driven execution, dependency-aware sequencing, and the reliability mechanisms that keep migration programs safe at scale. The question this analysis addresses is architectural rather than incremental: can migration orchestration be structured as a continuous, adaptive discipline instead of a one-time operational exercise, and which structural properties distinguish platforms that scale safely from those that accumulate risk as scope grows?

Distributed systems engineering has solved durable workflow execution, cluster-level resource scheduling, and progressive rollout individually. What remains unsettled is how these mechanisms compose into a single orchestration discipline built specifically for infrastructure migration, where the objects being relocated are entire operational systems, not individual application deployments, each carrying its own state, dependencies, and failure modes.

2. Challenges of Large-Scale Infrastructure Migrations

2.1 Dependency Complexity Beyond Simple Relocation

Calling a large-scale infrastructure migration a relocation problem, moving a workload from one environment to another, misstates where the difficulty actually lives. The workload itself is seldom the hard part in distributed systems. What complicates the picture is the dependency surface: databases, networking constructs, identity and security services, storage backends, service discovery registries, and external integrations that all must remain resolvable throughout the transition. A migration plan that treats these dependencies as static while focusing only on compute placement discovers their fragility only after production traffic hits it.

Nor are dependency graphs fixed artifacts in a distributed environment. Continuous deployment, deprecation, and re-versioning of services mean a dependency map drawn at the start of a program can be materially stale by the time later phases execute. Assuming a frozen topology, as some orchestration platforms implicitly do, converts that staleness directly into operational risk.

Service discovery infrastructure is especially important in this context. Standardized discovery mechanisms keep a migrated service resolvable to its consumers regardless of physical placement, separating logical dependency from physical location [21]. Absent tight integration between migration orchestration and discovery infrastructure, a service can complete its migration workflow and remain unreachable to dependents whose resolution state has not refreshed, an intermittent failure mode notoriously difficult to trace back to the migration event that caused it.

2.2 Operational Risk at Increasing Scale

The character of operational risk changes as migration scope grows from tens of services to thousands. Manual verification between steps is tolerable at a small scale; it becomes untenable at a large scale because the sheer volume of state transitions outpaces what any human operator can reasonably supervise. Application compatibility, resource availability across target environments, sequencing that respects upstream and downstream dependencies, rollback planning that has actually been tested rather than merely assumed, and configuration drift between source and destination all demand explicit accounting once scale increases.

Geographic and infrastructural heterogeneity compounds the picture further. Distributed organizations rarely migrate into one homogeneous target; workloads move across regions, availability zones, and sometimes across

infrastructure providers, each carrying distinct capacity characteristics and failure domains. Avoiding latency regressions or availability gaps during these transitions requires the orchestration layer to reason about placement constraints as a first-class concern, not as an afterthought to task completion.

Formal reference architecture work on cloud computing gives this heterogeneity structure, defining distinct actor roles and service layers that a migration program should reason about explicitly rather than treating the target environment as an undifferentiated compute pool [8]. Migration workflows that skip these structural distinctions tend to under-provision for capacity classes they never modeled, a gap that surfaces only once workloads are already relocated and carrying a production load.

2.3 The Cost of Underestimating Migration Complexity

None of this is hypothetical. A peer-reviewed empirical study surveyed 104 domain experts across multiple industry sectors and statistically validated which categories of migration challenge, dependency mapping, cutover risk, and operational continuity among them practitioners consistently rated most critical [23]. That the judgment held consistent across sectors suggests these difficulties are structural properties of large-scale migration itself, not artifacts of any one organization's particular tooling choices.

A systematic literature review of cloud migration challenges arrives at a compatible conclusion by a different route, synthesizing the published body of migration research rather than surveying practitioners directly, and identifies planning rigor, dependency awareness, and organizational readiness as recurring determinants of outcome regardless of the target platform [7]. Guidance on planning containerized workload migration reinforces the same point operationally, recommending explicit dependency discovery and phased validation ahead of large-scale cutover rather than treating discovery as an afterthought to execution [4].

3. Principles of Intelligent Migration Orchestration

3.1 Workflow Modeling as the Coordination Substrate

Migration activity, under intelligent orchestration, is modeled as a structured workflow rather than executed as a sequence of manually invoked scripts. The distinction is not cosmetic: workflows carry state. A workflow engine tracks what has executed, what remains pending, and what has failed and can resume from a consistent checkpoint after disruption rather than forcing an operator to reconstruct progress from scattered logs. What makes migration programs spanning weeks or months coherent, rather than degrading into ad hoc recovery, is durable execution semantics, workflow state that survives process restarts, platform deployments, and infrastructure failures alike [1].

Composability follows naturally once migration is modeled as workflow. A large program decomposes into sub-workflows, one per service or dependency cluster, executing concurrently where dependencies permit and sequentially where they do not. That composability is precisely what allows orchestration platforms to scale from coordinating dozens of transitions to coordinating thousands without the operator burden growing proportionally.

3.2 Dependency Analysis and Execution Sequencing

A dependency model that is built once and never refreshed is a planning artifact, not an operational one. Effective orchestration platforms instead maintain a continuously updated dependency model of the environment being migrated, and use it to drive execution sequencing directly: services with no unmet dependencies become eligible first, while services deep in a dependency chain wait until their prerequisites have completed and stabilized. Treating workload placement as a constraint satisfaction problem rather than a manually ordered checklist, as research on cluster-level scheduling shows, yields materially better resource utilization and fewer placement conflicts at scale [2].

Blast radius belongs in the same sequencing calculus. Migrating a foundational, widely depended-upon service early, before downstream tolerance has been validated, concentrates risk in a single high-impact step. Favoring low-

blast-radius services earlier in the program instead builds operational confidence and surfaces unknown dependency issues while the cost of discovering them stays low.

Concurrently executing sequencing decisions still need a single, authoritative view of program progress, which requires coordination primitives capable of maintaining agreement among distributed orchestration components even as individual nodes fail or go temporarily unreachable. Consensus-based coordination protocols supply exactly that guarantee, preventing concurrent orchestrator instances from diverging on what has actually completed [13].

3.3 Continuous Validation Integrated into Execution

Intelligent orchestration treats validation as a property embedded throughout execution, not a separate terminal phase. Infrastructure readiness, application health, target-environment capacity, and dependency resolution get evaluated continuously as a workflow progresses, not merely before it begins and after it ends. That continuous posture is what lets the orchestration platform halt or reroute a specific step the moment a precondition fails, rather than allowing the workflow to proceed on an assumption of readiness that no longer holds.

Practices proven in site reliability engineering translate directly here: defined service level objectives, tracked error budgets, and operational health treated as a continuously measured signal rather than a binary state. A migration step that erodes a service's error budget ought to be detectable and actionable inside the orchestration workflow itself, rather than surfacing only after the fact through incident response [14].

4. Reliability, Risk Mitigation, and Operational Safety

4.1 Progressive Execution as a Reliability Strategy

Business-critical production systems generally cannot absorb extended downtime, which is why reliable migration orchestration favors progressive execution over wholesale cutover. Instead of moving a service's entire traffic or workload footprint in one step, progressive strategies shift a controlled fraction of load to the migrated destination, observe behavior against defined health signals, and proceed to full cutover only once confidence is earned. Software deployment practice offers a close parallel: one documented industry case reported an 80 percent reduction in rollback rate after replacing a single-step release process with progressive, gated rollout, a reliability gain attributable specifically to incremental exposure rather than to any change in the underlying software [11].

None of this works without instrumentation. The orchestration platform needs fine-grained traffic or workload splitting and must treat health evaluation as a first-class part of each increment rather than a scheduling artifact bolted on afterward. Skipping that instrumentation and progressive rollout degrades into a slower version of wholesale cutover, minus the risk reduction it was meant to deliver.

Reliability Mechanism	Failure Mode Addressed	Structural Property Required
Durable workflow execution	Process, deployment, or infrastructure interruption	State that survives restarts and is resumable from checkpoint
Dependency-aware sequencing	Topological risk from stale or shifting dependency graphs	Continuously refreshed dependency model driving execution order
Progressive rollout	Concentrated blast radius from wholesale cutover	Fine-grained traffic or workload splitting with embedded health evaluation
Automated rollback	Unrecoverable or manually reconstructed failure state	Pre-captured state enabling deterministic reversal
Chaos-validated fault isolation	Untested assumptions about resilience under real failure	Deliberate fault injection exercising rollback and isolation paths

Table I. Reliability mechanisms in migration orchestration, the failure modes they address, and the structural properties they require.

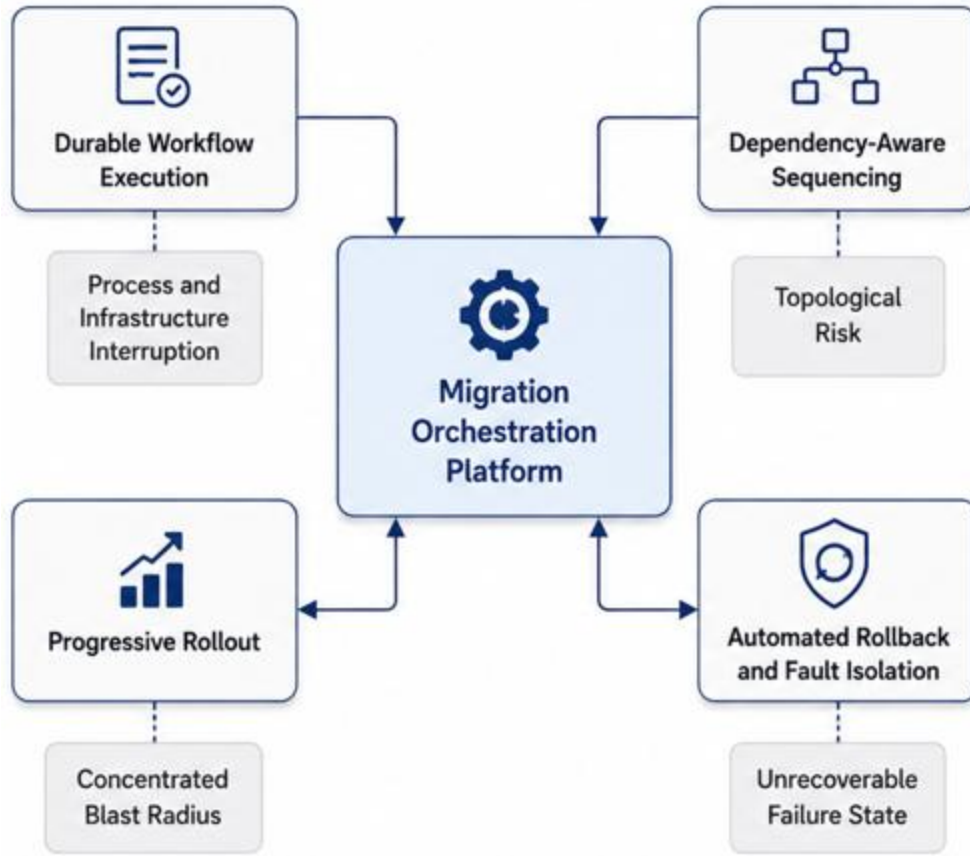


Figure 1. Reliable migration orchestration composes four distinct mechanisms, each addressing a separate category of operational risk, rather than depending on any single mechanism in isolation.

4.2 Automated Rollback and Fault Isolation

A rollback capability that exists only on paper, as a documented procedure rather than a tested, automated capability, is a latent risk sitting inside every large migration program. Reliable orchestration platforms give rollback the same durability guarantees as forward execution, treating it as a first-class workflow path so a failed step can be reversed without manual reconstruction of the prior state. Achieving that requires capturing sufficient state before each migration step so reversal is deterministic, not best-effort.

Fault isolation does complementary work, containing the blast area of a failing step to the smallest reasonable scope. If a dependency validation fails partway through a sub-workflow, the platform should pause or fail that sub-workflow independently rather than letting the failure cascade into unrelated, concurrently executing streams. This kind of isolation allows a program spanning thousands of services to absorb localized failures without programwide disruption.

Coordination services that maintain locks and configuration state across the distributed system give this isolation a concrete mechanism: a migration sub-workflow acquires exclusive control over the specific resources it is transitioning before proceeding, and a failure releases those locks cleanly instead of leaving resources in an ambiguous state that conflicting recovery logic could claim [15].

4.3 Chaos Engineering as a Validation Discipline for Migration Safety

Any reliability claim made about a migration orchestration platform is only as credible as the adversarial testing standing behind it. Chaos engineering, deliberately injecting failure to validate resilience assumptions under controlled

conditions, has matured considerably as a discipline. A recent multi-vocal literature review synthesizing 96 academic and practitioner sources published between January 2016 and April 2024 traced the field's evolution from isolated fault-injection experiments toward a structured practice with defined taxonomies, tooling, and adoption drivers across industry [6]. Applied specifically to migration orchestration, this means deliberately failing a dependency mid-workflow, degrading target-environment capacity during a step, or interrupting the orchestration platform itself. Exercises that confirm rollback, fault isolation, and continuous validation behave as designed under conditions that ordinary testing never touches.

4.4 Balancing Execution Speed Against Operational Safety

Risk mitigation in migration orchestration is, at bottom, a balancing act between organizational pressure to modernize quickly and the operational discipline needed to do it safely. Incremental rollout, dependency-aware scheduling that respects blast radius, checkpoint validation between phases, and controlled failure handling together let infrastructure teams surface problems while the stakes remain small, rather than discovering them only once a program has advanced too far to reverse cheaply. Treat that balance as fixed rather than tunable, and organizations tend toward one of two failure modes: excessive caution that stalls progress or risk accumulation that outpaces whatever validation mechanisms are supposed to catch it.

5. Automation and Decision Intelligence in Migration Workflows

5.1 From Scripted Tasks to Adaptive Infrastructure Management

Automation in migration orchestration has grown from executing a predefined sequence of operational tasks into a broader capability for adaptive infrastructure management. Modern platforms automate resource provisioning in the target environment, configuration synchronization between source and destination, dependency validation at each workflow stage, workload scheduling constrained by capacity and placement, rollback execution when preconditions fail, and post-migration verification confirming that migrated workloads behave as expected. That breadth of automation is precisely what allows migration programs to scale without operational headcount growing in step.

Kubernetes-native workload management makes the pattern concrete: controllers that continuously reconcile actual cluster state against a declared desired state remove the need for an operator to manually confirm that a migrated workload has stabilized, since the reconciliation loop itself surfaces and corrects drift [3]. Design documentation on how these controllers interact with the underlying scheduler shows reconciliation and placement operating as continuously cooperating processes rather than sequential phases, exactly the coupling that lets automated migration workflows adapt placement decisions mid-execution as cluster conditions shift [12].

Service-level abstractions reduce the manual reconfiguration burden further by decoupling a workload's network identity from its underlying compute placement, allowing consumers to resolve a stable service identity even as the concrete instances behind it change during a phased cutover [19]. Distributed coordination stores that maintain that mapping with strong consistency guarantees give the orchestration platform a reliable source of truth for where a service can currently be reached [20].

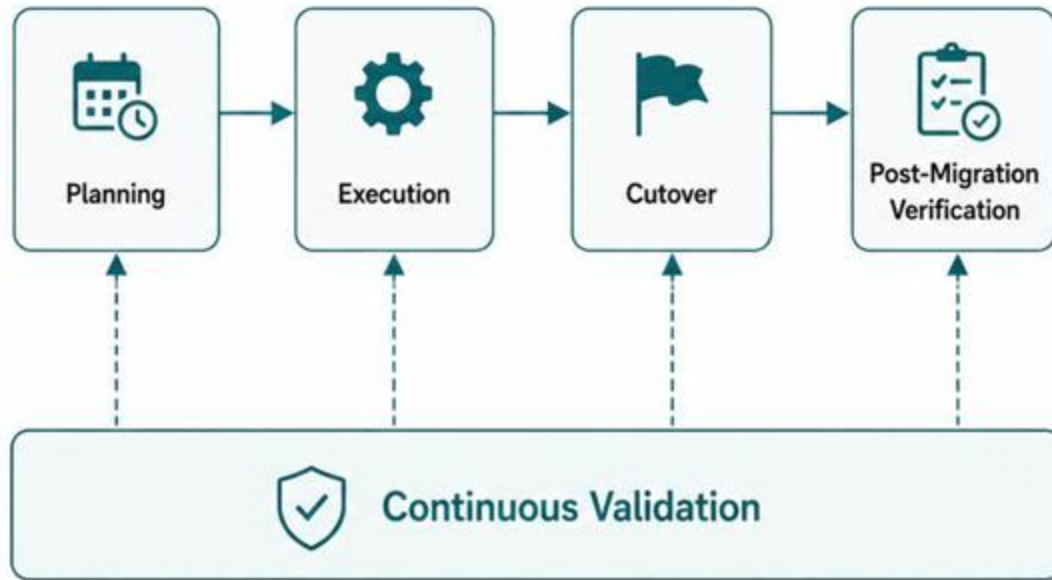


Figure 2. Intelligent orchestration embeds validation as a continuous property spanning the entire migration lifecycle rather than confining it to discrete checkpoints at the start and end.

5.2 Decision Intelligence and Predictive Operational Insight

Decision intelligence capabilities push orchestration platforms beyond fixed, predefined workflows toward systems that fold predictive analytics, workload optimization, and real-time operational insight directly into execution decisions. Rather than following a static migration plan regardless of observed conditions, a platform with decision intelligence can adjust sequencing, pause a migration stream approaching a capacity constraint, or reprioritize which services migrate next based on current infrastructure health and observed application performance.

This only works if observability data reaches the orchestration layer as a decision input, not merely as a dashboard for human eyes. Structured telemetry on request latency, error rates, resource saturation, and dependency health has to feed back into the orchestration engine's scheduling logic directly, or decision intelligence never rises above a reporting layer [18].

Service mesh architectures show how that feedback loop can be built in structurally rather than bolted on afterward. When traffic management, security enforcement, and observability collection sit in a shared data plane layer instead of being duplicated inside each application, the resulting telemetry stream carries consistent, comparable signals across every migrated service, which materially eases the decision intelligence layer's task of separating genuine regressions from ordinary service-to-service variance [17].

5.3 Reducing Manual Intervention Without Reducing Oversight

A common trap in automation initiatives is conflating less manual intervention with less oversight. Effective migration automation cuts the operational burden of routine, well-understood steps while preserving, and often improving, the visibility operators retain into program status. Automated systems that obscure their own decision-making erode operator trust precisely when trust matters most, during the anomaly the automation never anticipated. Platforms that expose clear, structured states about what has been executed, what remains pending, and why a given decision was made keep operator confidence intact even as manual steps are progressively removed.

6. Future Directions for Autonomous Infrastructure Orchestration

6.1 Toward Policy-Driven and AI-Assisted Orchestration

Infrastructure orchestration is trending toward increasingly autonomous operation, shaped by artificial intelligence, machine learning, and policy-driven infrastructure management rather than exclusively human-authored workflows. Future platforms are likely to evaluate migration readiness automatically against learned or codified policy, optimize execution sequences using historical outcomes from prior programs, predict operational risk before it becomes an incident, and recommend, or within bounded limits execute, corrective action without an operator having to initiate every response.

That trajectory does not remove human judgment from migration orchestration; it relocates that judgment to higher-leverage decisions, setting policy boundaries, approving autonomous action within defined risk tolerances, and investigating cases that fall outside what the system was built to handle on its own.

Platform engineering maturity frameworks offer a useful way to pace that transition responsibly. Organizations that formally assess platform capabilities against defined maturity dimensions, rather than adopting autonomous features opportunistically, are better positioned to tell which orchestration responsibilities are genuinely ready for reduced oversight and which still depend on operator judgment not yet captured in codified policy [9]. Broader cloud-native maturity assessments push this reasoning past the platform team alone into organizational culture, automation depth, and observability practice, reinforcing that autonomous orchestration capability tends to track overall organizational maturity rather than spring from a single tooling investment [10].

6.2 Intent-Based Infrastructure and Digital Twin Validation

Intent-based infrastructure management, where operators specify desired end states rather than the procedural steps to reach them, is poised to reshape how migration orchestration platforms get specified and operated. Paired with digital twin techniques that simulate a migration plan against a representative model of the target environment before execution, this direction shifts a meaningful share of migration risk discovery earlier, out of production execution and into pre-execution simulation.

That promise depends on the orchestration platform's dependency and capacity models being accurate enough for simulated outcomes to meaningfully predict production behavior, a nontrivial bar in distributed environments where topology never stops changing. Security posture has to travel with a migrated workload rather than being reconstructed afterward; frameworks describing how identity, policy, and trust boundaries should be enforced natively within cloud environments offer guidance on keeping a migrated workload's security controls intact throughout, rather than reopening a temporary gap during transition [16].

6.3 Autonomous Cloud Operations as a Long-Term Trajectory

Observability advances, digital twins, intent-based management, and autonomous decision-making point together toward a long-term trajectory where infrastructure orchestration platforms depend substantially less on manual procedure while maintaining, or improving, the reliability guarantees this article has described. Realizing that trajectory responsibly means introducing autonomy incrementally, validated against the same rigor, continuous validation, fault isolation, and chaos-tested rollback that reliable orchestration already demands of human-directed workflows.

7. Materials and Methods

7.1 Analytical Approach

A structured, literature-grounded analytical methodology underpins this work rather than a single empirical deployment. It synthesizes distributed systems research on durable workflow execution, cluster-level scheduling, service reliability engineering, and chaos engineering with the author's operational experience architecting workflow-driven infrastructure migration and Kubernetes-based orchestration at internet scale, drawing out the structural principles that separate orchestration platforms that scale safely from those that accumulate risk as scope growsv[28].

7.2 Source Selection Criteria

Three categories of source anchor the analysis: foundational distributed systems literature establishing durable execution and cluster scheduling principles, current platform documentation showing how those principles are implemented in production-grade orchestration tooling, and recent empirical or literature-review studies quantifying migration challenges, chaos engineering maturity, and progressive rollout outcomes. Sources published within the preceding five years were prioritized, with foundational systems papers retained where they establish an architectural lineage still directly reflected in current orchestration practice.

The progressive execution discussion draws on pipeline-level deployment research covering canary and blue-green techniques in real production CI/CD settings, deliberately anchoring that section in measured outcomes instead of general description [5]. Service mesh coordination architecture documentation rounds out the source set, substantiating how distributed discovery services keep routing state consistent across services migrating concurrently [22].

7.3 Analytical Framework

The article's structural argument, that intelligent migration orchestration is a continuous discipline built from workflow modeling, dependency-aware sequencing, embedded validation, and progressive risk mitigation, was checked against every cited source for consistency, then organized around the operational lifecycle of a migration program: planning and dependency analysis, execution and sequencing, reliability and rollback, automation and decision support, and forward-looking autonomous operation.

8. Discussion

8.1 Orchestration as a Composed System, Not a Single Mechanism

No single mechanism examined here, workflow durability, dependency sequencing, progressive rollout, or automated rollback, is individually sufficient to make large-scale infrastructure migration safe. Each addresses a distinct failure mode: durability handles process and infrastructure interruption, dependency sequencing handles topological risk, progressive rollout handles blast radius, and automated rollback handles recoverability. Platforms that implement these mechanisms in isolation, without composing them into a coherent workflow-driven system, tend to reproduce exactly the operational fragility they set out to eliminate [23].

8.2 The Role of Validation as a Continuous, Not Terminal, Activity

Validation loses most of its value the moment it is treated as a terminal gate rather than a continuous property of execution, a theme that runs through this article's reliability and automation discussions alike [24]. Platforms that validate readiness once before a migration begins, and again after it completes, leave the entire execution window unmonitored by the orchestration logic itself, leaning on operators to catch problems as they emerge. Embedding validation throughout execution and coupling it with automated pause or rollback behavior is what allows migration programs to scale beyond what manual supervision can realistically cover [25].

8.3 Implications for Practitioners

Three practical priorities fall out of this analysis for infrastructure teams planning migration programs at distributed scale. Durable, composable workflow modeling deserves investment before migration volume scales up, since retrofitting durability into an already-scaled program is far harder than designing for it from the start [26]. Dependency modeling should be treated as a continuously refreshed input rather than a static planning artifact. And rollback and fault isolation mechanisms need validation through deliberate fault injection well before they are relied on during an actual migration incident, because untested rollback paths tend to fail exactly when needed most [27].

8.4 Limitations and Directions for Further Study

This analysis is architectural and conceptual, not a controlled empirical study of a single migration program, an appropriate scope for establishing structural principles but not a substitute for comparative measurement across

organizations using different orchestration approaches. Research quantifying migration program outcomes, completion time, incident rate, and rollback frequency, across organizations with materially different orchestration maturity would meaningfully extend the structural claims made here [28].

9. Conclusion

Large-scale infrastructure migration in distributed cloud environments has become a continuous engineering discipline rather than a bounded project, and the orchestration platforms supporting it need to be architected on that premise. The case made across the preceding sections is that intelligent migration orchestration rests on four composed capabilities: durable, composable workflow modeling that survives interruption; dependency-aware sequencing that adapts to a continuously shifting topology; validation embedded throughout execution rather than confined to its endpoints; and reliability mechanisms, progressive rollout, automated rollback, and chaos-validated fault isolation that are tested rather than assumed. None of these capabilities carries the discipline alone, and organizations that adopt them piecemeal tend to keep the operational risk they set out to eliminate.

This analysis adds beyond the existing literature on workflow durability, cluster scheduling, and chaos engineering treated separately is a structural account of how these previously distinct mechanisms compose into one orchestration discipline built specifically for infrastructure migration, where what moves is an entire operational system rather than a single application deployment. As distributed infrastructure keeps growing in scale and interdependency, migration orchestration stands to become a durable architectural capability rather than a recurring operational burden, provided autonomy and automation are introduced with the same rigor human-directed migration practice already demands.

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Biographical Sketch: Sanjay Singh is a Staff Software Engineer with more than a decade of experience in distributed systems, service mesh architecture, and cloud infrastructure. His work focuses on service discovery, zero trust security, edge traffic infrastructure, and large-scale workload migration orchestration for internet-scale production environments. He has co-authored peer-reviewed research on production zero-trust deployment and presented technical work at industry venues including HAProxy Conf and the Apache Traffic Server Fall Summit.

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