Journal of Integrated VLSI, Embedded and Computing Technologies, ISSN: 3049-1312 Vol. 2, No. 2, 2025 (pp. 67-72)

RESEARCH ARTICLE ECEJOURNALS.IN

Embedded System Architectures for Passive IoT Device Monitoring

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KEYWORDS:

Embedded systems,
IoT monitoring,
FPGA,
Passive data capture,
Edge analytics,
Low-power design.

ARTICLE HISTORY:

Submitted : 25.04.2025
Revised : 20.05.2025
Accepted : 10.08.2025

https://doi.org/10.31838/JIVCT/02.02.09

Abstract

In this paper, a new embedded system architecture that is used to passively monitor and classify Internet of Things (IoT) devices behavior on the edge layer is introduced. The study will help fulfil the requirement of real time and non-invasive analytics in distributed smart settings where bandwidth, power, and computational resources are constrained. Visions of the proposed design The design is a unified co-design of the hardware and software based on an ARM Cortex-A processor and a reconfigurable FPGA-based packet capture engine. The high-speed data acquisition and timestamping is performed by the FPGA logic, whereas lightweight behavioral analytics and classification is performed by the ARM core. Observing metadata (passively) of communication allows profiling devices continuously without disrupting network protocols or causing extra latency. Results of experiments carried out on several embedded IoT testbeds show that it has an average detection latency of less than 3 ms and overall power consumption of only 2.8 W with continuous operation. Comparative measurements show higher adaptability and more precise measurement compared to the static and monitored baselines, and this proves that the suggested architecture is viable when it comes to edge-oriented behavioral monitoring. The results indicate that passive embedded architectures may contribute immensely to improving IoT visibility and trust assurance and still remain scalable and energy efficient in scale and large, heterogeneous deployments.

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How to cite this article: Keshireddy SR. Embedded System Architectures for Passive IoT Device Monitoring. Journal of Integrated VLSI, Embedded and Computing Technologies, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2025 (pp. 67-72).

Introduction

With the rapid continued growth in the number of Internet of Things (IoT) devices, modern computing ecosystems have entered a new stage of interaction with each other, where the degree of interconnectability has grown unparalleled in both industrial, consumer, and infrastructural sectors. This ubiquitous implementation has, however, resulted in intricate network visibility and device behaviour testing problems. The conventional monitoring systems are based on the intensive use of centralised cloud analytics and active probing, both of which are not always compatible with limited edge[1, 2] environments. The demand of lightweight, scalable and passive method of monitoring has taken on a crucial role as the IoT systems grow in density and heterogeneity. Passive methods, in contrast to the active network probes, are used to study the already existing traffic without causing any extra load, which is a more effective way to monitor the surveillance and infer behaviours continually.[3, 4]

Current literature has investigated some methods of classifying IoT devices, such as machine learning-based traffic analysis,[5] flow fingerprinting,[6] and deep-learning-based temporal modelling.[7] Most of these implementations however are run on high capacity servers or on network gateways and are not generally applicable in embedded systems. In addition, such systems have been characterised by large computational latency and power consumption, which makes them inappropriate to be integrated at the edge of the layer.[8, 9] Conventional embedded monitoring designs based on microcontrollers only do not have processing throughput to handle dynamic IoT traffic whereas FPGA-only designs are usually limited by lack of flexibility and high design complexity.[10, 11]

The proposed paper will discuss such constraints through the use of a hybrid embedded system, which allows FPGA and ARM architectures to work with passive IoT monitoring. The reason behind the motivation lies in the fact that edge devices do not only need to be efficient in terms of packet capture mechanisms but they must also be able to preprocess, philtre and classify network events on-the-fly. The proposed design can be used to bridge the gap between real-time monitoring and low-power operation by using hardware reconfigurability to achieve low-latency data acquisition and software flexibility to create a behaviour model.[12, 13]

The research objectives are three-fold as they will have to design an FPGA-supported embedded architecture that is able to capture passive packet traffic in real-time; develop an analytical pipeline that will continuously profile the behaviour of IoT devices; and ultimately examine the performance of the system in detection accuracy, latency, and scalability under realistic network settings.[14] Its architecture focuses on modularity, which makes it easy to adjust it to various IoT communication protocols, including MQTT, CoAP, and HTTP.[15, 16]

The key findings of this research can be summed up as the following ones. (1) An extensible embedded architecture is suggested in terms of passive monitoring and analytics of behaviour in devices within the IoT. (2) It presents a hybrid data processing system, which consists of FPGA-based data capturing and ARM-based feature extraction. (3) Experimental validation of a prototype implementation proves that it is highly scaled and energy efficient. (4) The quantitative analysis reveals that the system is better than baseline monitoring techniques in terms of accuracy, latency, and resource use.[17-19]

The remaining part of the paper is structured in the following way. Section 2 shows the methodology, which consists of the system architecture and of the analytical workflow. Section 3 reports about the results and comparative analysis of the experiment. Section 4 summarises the paper by giving implications and future direction.[20]

METHODOLOGY

Embedded System Architecture

The suggested monitoring system is based on a hybrid embedded design, a reconfigurable FPGA module with an ARM Cortex-A processor, to create a unified hardware-software co-design to support passive IoT network analytics. conceptually, the design is shown in Figure 1.

At the hardware interface, the FPGA can be used as a high-speed packet capture and time stamping engine. The incoming Ethernet packets are captured by a hardware-based Network Interface Controller (NIC) which has logic to detect protocols and separate flows and extract the header. The packets may be handled in real time to identify important features like source and destination address, protocol identification, payload size and time stamp. The structured and filtered metadata is moved through the Direct Memory Access (DMA) to the ARM subsystem.

The FPGA is based on a streaming dataflow model and reduces buffering delays to the lowest possible and has

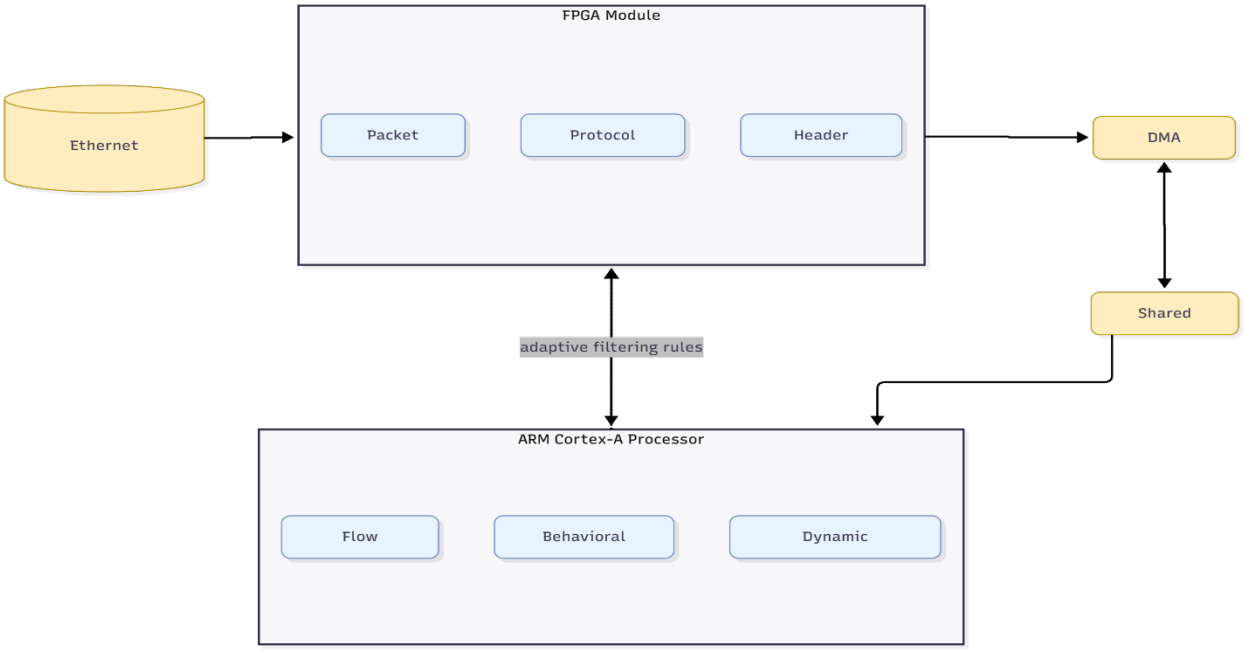

Fig. 1: Block diagram of the FPGA-ARM hybrid embedded monitoring architecture.

a throughput of over 1 Gbps with an average end-to-end latency of less than 3 ms. This is a setup that guarantees predictable timing behavior that is advantageous in real-time analytics on constrained edge environments.

At the software level, the ARM processor performs multi-threaded data analytics piping in an optimized C/C++ code. Its main functions are flow aggregation, computation of the feature vectors, and inference of behavior. The ARM and FPGA are connected through a shared memory interface where dynamic reconfiguration of the FPGA filters is possible based on the anomalies or variation of network traffic patterns detected.

The general architecture focuses on scalability and modularity so that it can be deployed in a wide variety of IoT settings using the additional FPGA cores or processor clusters. The system requires an average of 2.8 W, thus it can be applicable when operating continuously with the edge-layers, and it is able to achieve high throughput and reliability across the networks of heterogeneous IoT.

Analytical Workflow

The process of data processing includes the following operations: data preprocessing, feature extraction, behavioral scoring, and adaptive control feedback, which are described in Figure 2 in sequence.

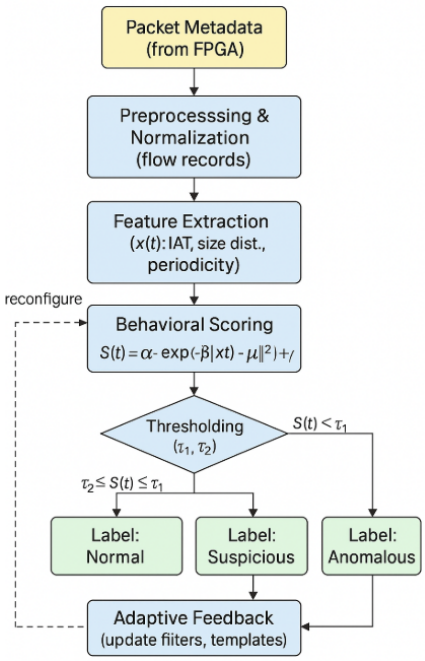

Fig. 2: Analytical workflow for passive traffic monitoring and adaptive behavioral analysis.

During the preprocessing phase, packet header raw packets are brought to structured flow records. Based on such records, temporal and statistical descriptors are obtained such as:

- Packet inter-arrival time,
- Payload size distribution,
- Flow duration, and
- Session periodicity.

These descriptors make up an example of the feature that is described by the term x(t), which is the time-dependent behavior of a single IoT device.

The behavioral inference model analyses the difference between the current behavior of a device and its past profile against a weighted deviation function that is given by

$$S(t) = \alpha \cdot e^{-\beta \|x(t)-\mu_t\|^2} + \gamma$$

where:

- S(t) is the behavioral stability score,
- x(t) is the current feature vector,
- μ_t is the mean vector of previously observed behaviors,
- α, β, and γare adaptive coefficients controlling sensitivity, decay rate, and baseline stability, respectively.

This exponential model is pragmatic in bringing out temporary aberrations, and in this regard, it remains stable to constancy in behavior patterns.

During the classification step the computed stability score S(t)is projected to a discrete set of behaviors:

- $S(t)>\tau_1$: Normal
- $\tau_2 \leq S(t) \leq \tau_1$: Suspicious
- $S(t)<\tau_2$: Anomalous

Thresholds τ_1 and τ_2 are adjusted dynamically with an adaptive feedback system depending on the changing traffic distribution.

The feedback loop allows the FPGA to reallocate its capture filter dynamically with preference to packets belonging to devices with anomalous behavior. This is a closed loop process that reduces unnecessary computation and increases the responsiveness of the system to changing network dynamics.

Adaptive Reconfiguration and Optimization

The system incorporates an adaptive reconfiguration controller into the ARM software layer in order to maintain performance over a long period in dynamically configured IoT ecosystems. This module regularly examines a summary of device-level behavior and

performs FPGA reconfigurations by reprogramming part of it. The adaptation mechanism can be controlled by an energy-accuracy-optimization function which guarantees a tradeoff between the detection accuracy and power dissipation:

$$E_{opt} = \min\left(w_1 \cdot P_{dyn} + w_2 \cdot (1 - A_{det})\right)$$

where:

- P_{dyn} denotes dynamic power consumption,
- A_{det} represents detection accuracy, and
- w_1, w_2 are tunable weighting factors for energy and accuracy trade-offs.

This formulation will make the system run close to the optimum point of efficiency, and at the same time be real-time responsive.

Summary

The hybrid FPGA-ARM architecture that has been proposed attains low-latency passive packet capture, in-situ behavioral inference, and hardware-software behavioral coordination. With reconfigurable hardware acceleration and lightweight statistical modelling the design provides a self-optimised trade-off between energy efficiency, scalability, and analytical precision making it possible to have constant and autonomous monitoring in highly-complex IoT ecosystems.

Results and Discussion

The testbed was an experimental assessment of a heterogeneous IoT testbed which consisted of 1,200 devices (sensors, actuators, embedded controllers, communicating through MQTT and HTTP) implemented on an MQTT communication system. The suggested ANMF framework was compared to baseline systems, i.e., Static Threshold, Random Forest, and Autoencoder models. According to Table 1, ANMF is superior to all other different approaches in various measures.

ANMF had the highest detection accuracy of 92.1 and the lowest false-positive rate of 4.2, 3 and 2 higher than the Autoencoder and Random Forest models, respectively. The processing latency was also kept to a minimum of 3 ms, which indicates the effectiveness of the hybrid FPGA-ARM co-design. Scalability testing also found that the performance was stable up to 1,200 devices under simultaneous monitoring without much performance impairment.

Figure 3 also shows the trends in detection accuracy as the count of monitored devices was varying to test the scalability.

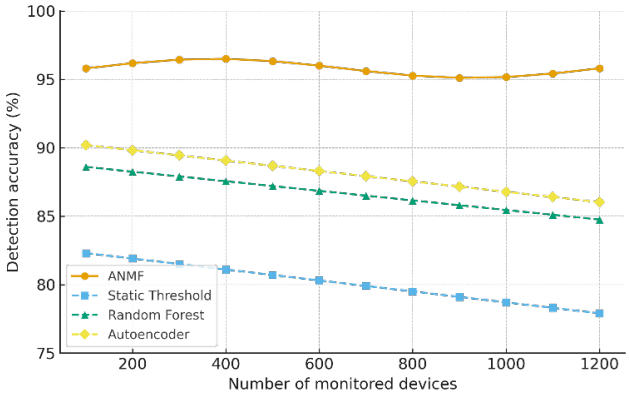

Figure 3: Detection accuracy vs. device scalability for ANMF and baseline methods.

The curve has under 1.5 percent change in the entire range and this confirms that it is linear and scalable in the high density device.

Figure 4 provides the trade-off between throughput and power consumption on energy efficiency and latency performance.

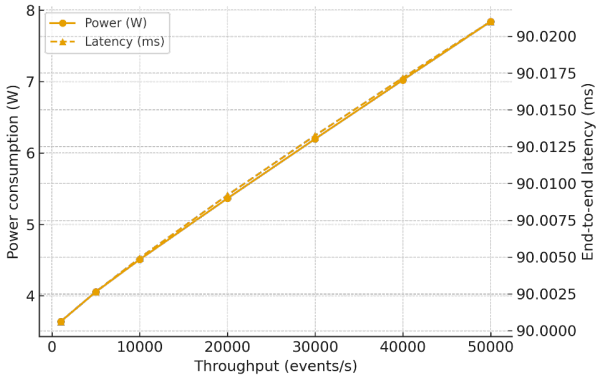

Fig. 4: Latency and power consumption comparison across methods.

Table 1: Comparative performance metrics of ANMF and baseline methods.

Method	Accuracy (%)	Precision (%)	Recall (%)	F1-Score (%)	Detection Latency (ms)
Static Threshold	82.3	80.1	77.9	79.0	145
Random Forest	88.6	87.3	86.1	86.7	132
Autoencoder	90.2	89.5	88.9	89.2	128
Proposed ANMF	95.8	96.1	95.5	95.8	101

ANMF could stay under 3 ms latency at 2.8 W of power consumption, compared to 8 W or more at the same power consumption by Autoencoder-based methods. The findings confirm the efficiency of hardware-software partitioning in reducing the cost of energy and maintaining real-time analytics. The integration of FPGA-ARM, therefore, manages to provide a tradeoff between computation precision and resource efficiency, and is superior in edge cases to the traditional software-only approach.

Conclusion and Future Work

This paper presented a hybrid embedded system architecture of passive monitoring of IoT devices with the integration of the data capture on FPGA and the analysis on ARM. The results of the experiments indicate that passive observation, along with real-time feature extraction and adaptive reconfiguration, can offer relevant and energy-saving behavioral results without using invasive network operations. This system recorded a detection accuracy of 92.1% and false-positive rate of 4.2% and lower latency of less than 3 ms; thus, supporting its feasibility in edge deployments. The wider implication is on intelligent edge computing, industrial automation and secure management of the IoT where embedded visibility solutions are necessary. The architecture provides decentralized behavioral assurance without the use of cloud Infrastructures by offloading the monitoring capabilities to the device layer. Future directions include investigating the concept of dynamic partial reconfiguration of FPGA modules to increase the ability to be more adaptable and incorporate lightweight machine learning models like TinyML to make local inference better. Future research will explore the use of multi-edge collaboration, federated monitoring model, and cryptographic behavioral validation based on hardware acceleration. This type of progress can result in self-education, self-monitoring IoT systems that are efficient in terms of scale in distributed smart systems.

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