

Zulfikar Ali

Residing: **Birmingham, UK** | Working: **Canary Wharf** | Nationality: **British**

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Profile

Senior Technical Leader and Architect with extensive experience designing and governing enterprise-scale cloud and security platforms. Combines deep expertise across Cloud Architecture, Security Architecture (CCSP), DevOps and Platform Engineering with a track record of leading high-performing engineering teams and delivering complex transformation programmes in regulated environments.

Proven ability to operate across architecture, security and engineering domains simultaneously — translating strategic objectives into scalable, secure, and cost-effective cloud operating models. Experienced in executive stakeholder engagement, governance board representation, and driving measurable outcomes across multi-disciplinary technology functions.

Core Competencies

Cloud Architecture & Governance · Security Architecture (CCSP) · Zero Trust Architecture · DevOps & Platform Engineering · Kubernetes & Container Orchestration (AKS/EKS/OpenShift) · GitOps & CI/CD · Infrastructure as Code (Terraform) · Azure Landing Zone Design · Cloud Adoption Framework · Well-Architected Framework · FinOps & Cost Governance · Identity & Access Management (Entra ID, CyberArk, PIM/PAM) · Supply Chain Security (Aqua, Sysdig, SonarQube, Nexus) · Hybrid & Multi-Cloud Strategy · Disaster Recovery & Operational Resilience · Azure OpenAI Service & AI Foundry · AI Workload Security · Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) Architecture · Executive Stakeholder Engagement · Architecture Governance · Strategic Roadmapping

Work Experience

Career Break — Personal & Professional Development

Jan 2025 – Present

Deliberately took an extended career break to invest in professional development, personal commitments, and broader life experience. Achievements during this period include:

- Attained CCSP and CISM certifications
- Continued mentoring four junior technology professionals
- Developed applied knowledge in AI architecture and emerging LLM deployment patterns
- Extensive international travel, 15+ countries and multiple road trips across Europe

Cloud Platform & Security Architect | EBRD

Jan 2019 – Jan 2025 (Contract)

Led the end-to-end design, build and strategic evolution of the Bank's Azure cloud platform, accountable for architecture, security, resilience, cost governance and hybrid integration across all IT functions.

Built and led a 17-strong Cloud, DevOps and Platform Engineering team, driving the transformation from on-premises infrastructure to a secure, scalable cloud operating model.

Acted as senior technical authority on cloud across the organisation, partnering with development leads, solution architects, security leadership and executive stakeholders to ensure cloud adoption delivered measurable business value.

Key Responsibilities

- Enterprise Cloud Architect and Azure SME, accountable for architectural governance, solution design (HLD/LLD), and technical direction across all cloud initiatives
- Defined and owned the enterprise cloud service strategy, spanning security architecture, disaster recovery, high availability, and operational resilience
- Executive stakeholder management across Security, Infrastructure, application owners, and strategic vendors including Microsoft, Check Point, and Sonatype
- Maintained architectural integrity across engineering delivery, balancing senior hands-on involvement with delegated team autonomy

Key Accomplishments

- Led the enterprise implementation of Azure Kubernetes Service (AKS), enabling secure microservices-based application deployment and establishing containerisation as a strategic platform capability
- Designed and delivered a secure, scalable Azure Landing Zone aligned to the Cloud Adoption Framework, integrating networking, identity (Entra ID), RBAC, Defender for Cloud, Azure Firewall, monitoring, and data services (SQL/CosmosDB) to support multi-workload adoption
- Architected and governed the Azure platform deployment for the organisation's first enterprise AI solution — a private HR chatbot built on Azure OpenAI Service and AI Foundry, with HR data ingested via Azure Blob Storage. Scaling from a 100-user pilot to full rollout across 5,000 employees
- Designed and owned the security framework for the AI platform, encompassing subscription-level RBAC, private endpoint configuration, data classification, Defender for Cloud integration, and audit logging via Azure Monitor — ensuring enterprise security posture from pilot through to production.
- Established a PaaS/SaaS-first architecture strategy, embedding Infrastructure as Code (Terraform) to standardise platform configuration, improve repeatability, and strengthen governance
- Achieved security approval for the Bank's first cloud-native application framework and first production business application, significantly strengthening tenant security posture
- Delivered a 40% reduction in cloud spend (2021–2023) and implemented a process for managing cloud costs on an ongoing basis
- Defined and executed the annual DevOps roadmap, aligning platform evolution with enterprise architecture objectives and enabling iterative delivery through Agile practices
- Acted as senior representative at architecture and security governance boards, leading remediation strategy following penetration testing and driving rapid resolution of critical and high-risk findings

Cloud Architect | CLEARSTREAM

Sep 2018 – Jan 2019 (Contract)

- Led the end-to-end Azure deployment (HLD, PoC, and Production) for a flagship Investment Services application under strict security protocols.
- Provided cross-border architectural support between Luxembourg and Frankfurt to establish the firm's initial Azure deployment lifecycle

Cloud Architect | GROUPEM

Apr 2018 – Aug 2018 (Contract)

- Cloud SME delivering a 'Cloud Foundation' framework architecture in Azure/AWS for GroupM
- Developing cloud security and compliance operations including implementation of a DM VPN

Senior Solution Architect | FUJITSU

Jun 2010 - Mar 2018 (Permanent)

- **AD/Cloud Consultant & Lead Designer:** Provided Active Directory/Azure AD and multi-cloud expertise (AWS, Azure, OpenStack) in creating reference designs for major UK accounts
- **Strategic Win:** Architected an Azure POC for Specsavers that directly secured a £32M contract.
- **Identity Federation:** Designed high-quality identity solutions for multiple clients including DEFRA, Crossrail, G4S, CRH for example and consistently excellent client feedback

Technical Consultant | PARATIVE

2008 – 2010 (Permanent)

- Multi-disciplinary role covering bid work, pre-sales, proof of concept, technical demos, designs
- Led 20+ enterprise migrations, met 50+ customers across all grades from C-level to support staff

Migration SME @ EDS (MoD DII, DSS/DWP, Barclays) - Contract 2003 – 2008

Various IT Support/Migration Roles – Contracts 2000 – 2003

Certifications

CCSP - Certified Cloud Security Professional, ISC2

CISM - Certified Information Security Manager, ISACA

MCP 70-534 - Architecting Microsoft Azure Solutions, Microsoft

AWS Certified Solutions Architect- Professional (expired)

MCITP 2008 Enterprise Architect, Microsoft

Education

BSc Psychology from University of Wolverhampton

4 A Levels, 10 GCSES from King Edwards VI Camp Hill Grammar School, Birmingham

Interests

Mentoring with a particular focus on bridging the gap between higher education and real-life enterprise IT.
Travelling to new destinations, off the beaten track. Avid follower of Wolverhampton Wanderers FC