

Parameterized AES-based Crypto Processor for FPGAs

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Abstract — In this paper, we propose a parameterized crypto co-processor based on Advanced Encryption Standard (AES). This parameterized AES module is integrated into a 32-bit general purpose 5-stage pipelined MIPS processor. The integrated AES module is a fully pipelined which follows both inner and outer round pipeline design. The processor fetch an instruction from the instruction memory and sends it to the decode stage. The crypto instruction pushed into the AES module during the decode stage, however if the instructions belongs to the MIPS processor it completes the remaining cycles on the pipeline stages of the MIPS processor. The parameterized AES module can achieve different latencies on different rounds of AES according to the application requirements. The effects of different number of rounds on latency, memory, and area are studied and reported.

Keywords—Cryptographic; Field Programmable Gate Array; Parameterized AES pipeline; Processor

I. INTRODUCTION

Cryptography is one of the important applications using Field Programmable Gate Arrays (FPGAs). For instance, servers that need to handle lots of encrypted authentications are benefited by using FPGAs. Advanced Encryption Standard (AES) is a very widespread symmetric-cryptography algorithm for encrypting data. FPGAs offer a required performance for this algorithm. Besides the performance and speed, there are other characteristics of FPGAs like device utilization that makes them suitable choices for cryptography [1]. The main purpose of cryptographic algorithm is to provide security. Data Encryption Standard (DES) [2] have been used as a cryptographic algorithm for last several years but it is replaced by the Rijndael algorithm due to its shorter key length. The Rijndael algorithm has become as a standard in cryptography which is called Advanced Encryption Standard [3]. Encryption is a transformation technique to change the user data (known as plaintext) to an unreadable form called ciphertext. The hardware implementation of the crypto algorithm which are associated with keys is by nature more secure and cannot be easily modified from outside [4]. Field Programmable Gate Arrays (FPGAs) provide the best platform

for the hardware implementation of cryptographic algorithms because of their re-programmable capability and their ability to modify the design at any time. FPGAs offer the best solution for researchers to implement and test the designs. When the Rijndael algorithm has become as a standard encryption algorithm, many hardware implementations based on FPGA and ASIC have been proposed [4-11]. In addition, some software implementations have been taken into consideration [12] because of their ease of up gradation, portability, and flexibility. ASIC provides a low power design but the design time and time to market are very high and it has the lack of flexibility. This paper proposes an approach to combine the general purpose processor with the crypto co-processor. In this work, the general purpose processor is MIPS-32 [13] with five pipelined stages while crypto processor utilizes a parameterized AES-128 as a crypto algorithm.

Our design is implemented in such a way that crypto instructions do not block the instruction fetch cycle of the processor even though the crypto co-processor is running on that time. Each instruction is fetched from the instruction memory unit and it completes all cycles on the MIPS processor if the instruction is designed for the processor. If the instruction is not a MIPS instruction, it will be sent to the crypto co-processor after the next clock cycle of the decode stage. We incorporate parameterized AES module as a crypto co-processor with MIPS. The main aim is to use a parameterized AES is to select the number of rounds according to the application requirements. Moreover, the crypto co-processor is performed by the MIPS processor without affecting the pipeline stages.

This paper is organized as follows. Section II presents the AES algorithm. Section III describes the FPGA implementation of AES while the pipelined version of AES is presented in Section IV. The MIPS processor and the integration of the parameterized AES in MIPS have been described in Sections V and VI, respectively. In Section VII experimental results are discussed while Section VIII concludes the paper.

II. AES ALGORITHM

As it is already mentioned, Advanced Encryption Standard (AES) has been selected as an encryption standard in November 2001 which is based on the Rijndael algorithm [1]. AES utilizes the symmetric cipher blocks supporting different data lengths of 128, 192 and 256 bits. It also has the ability to support different key sizes of 128, 192 and 256 bits. Encryption and decryption depends on the number of rounds, i.e. 10-rounds (requires 128 bits), 12-rounds (requires 192 bits), and 14-rounds (requires 256 bits). The AES algorithm comprises of four different steps as key addition, S-box substitution, Shift Rows and MixColumn (see Fig. 1) [35]. S-box substitution is the only non-linear transformation which comprises of two steps. The first step is the multiplicative inverse of input bytes in which an affine transformation can be applied on it. There are two different ways to implement S-box entries as using look up tables or computing mathematically. The purpose of Shift Rows and MixColumn are to create diffusion that is a linear operation.

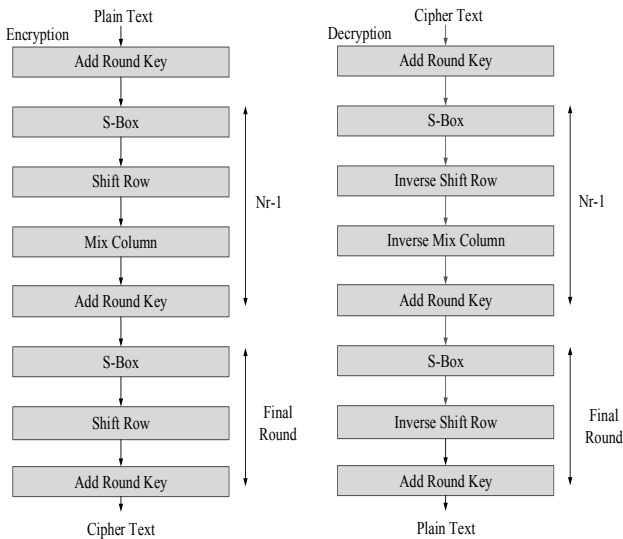


Fig. 1. AES Algorithm.

A. Key Addition Layer

Key addition layer is used to generate the number of keys used in each round of encryption and decryption. The key addition layer has two inputs. One is the output of the MixColumn and the other one is sub-key. This layer is simply performed by a bit wise XOR gate operation between two inputs

B. S-Box design (Subbyte and Inv Subbyte)

S-Box is the non-linear component of the AES algorithm, which is used to create confusion in the input bytes. There are two different methods to implement S-Box. The first method

is to generate a look up table of 256-by-8 bit with permanent entries; but in this case it uses less hardware resources with more critical delay [14]. The second approach is to implement S-Box in order to decompose inversion Galois Field, $GF(2^8)$ into the sequence of operations (addition, multiplication and inversion). This method consumes more hardware resources with short critical path [14]. Implementation of the inverse SubByte for the decryption of data comprises similar multiplicative inversion in $GF(2^8)$ and inverse affine transformation.

C. Shift Rows and Inv Shift Rows

Diffusion layers include two-steps as rows shifting and column mixing. The encryption uses the shift rows operation while the decryption uses the inverse shift rows operation. The shift rows operation can be done by right shifting the elements of state matrix while the inverse shift rows operation can be done by left shifting the elements of state matrix.

D. MixColumn and Inv MixColumn

MixColumn is the second step of the diffusion layer. It is the linear transformation which mixes each column of matrix. In this step, after the shift row operation each column of the state matrix is multiplied by a specific matrix. Multiplication and the addition of the coefficient are done in $GF(2^8)$. Inverse MixColumn operation is used in decryption, in order to inverse the output of MixColumn step.

III. FPGA IMPLEMENTATION OF AES

The efficient implementation of the AES algorithm on FPGA is being under discussion from last several years in terms of throughput, minimum area requirement, and high speed. The main reason to choose FPGA for the implementation of the cryptographic algorithms is to allow changing designs with almost no additional time, a low cost, and a short design cycle. An FPGA-based AES implementation is presented in [4] while several other high speed Implementations have been explored in [5], [6], [7], [8], [9] and [10] in which the speed ranged from Mbps to several Gbps. Some of the presented AES approaches implemented the AES as a pipeline manner either in inner rounds or outer rounds. The processor based implementation is presented in [11] and [12]. The architecture with a smaller data path is presented in [14] which can achieve 20% reduction in the area overhead. 15% area reduction is achieved by [15] while only 0.052 mm² area required by [16] to support both encryption and decryption and to obtain the throughput of 311 Mbps. In [17] a method is presented with the throughput of 2.2 Mbps while consuming only two memory blocks and 124 slices. Optimizing S-Box is another way to optimize the AES implementation in terms of area and speed [12], [18], [19], [20], [21] and [22]. The optimization of MixColumn and inverse MixColumn is also investigated in [23], [24] and [25] while the pipeline implementation of AES on FPGA is proposed in [26].

IV. PIPELINED AES

Fig. 2 shows the implementation of the pipelined AES in which several procedures can be run concurrently [36]. Pipelining in the Advanced Encryption Standard is used to get a higher throughput and a higher speed achieved as multiple rounds of AES can be handled concurrently. However, it consumes a lot of area [27]. The speed of the AES algorithm can be increased by pipelining, sub-pipelining, and loop unrolling. The optimization techniques such as optimization of S-Box, optimization of mixcolumn, and inverse mixcolumn are not efficient solutions to increase the speed [28]. The cost of hardware resources and their processing speed are very slow in unrolled AES architectures [29]. Pipelining and sub-pipelining provides high throughput [30] about up to 26.64 Gbps. Since pipelining methods consume more hardware resources, researchers have been focusing on the implementation of the AES pipelining in a way that it consumes less hardware resources. Several pipelined methods have been proposed to achieve high throughput and low area overhead [31] and [32]. The throughput achieved by [32] is around 20.3 Gbps. In this paper, we present a fully pipelined implementation of 128, 192, and 256 bits AES. Our design is implemented on a Virtex 6 ML605 and the design is run at the frequency of 1042 MHz.

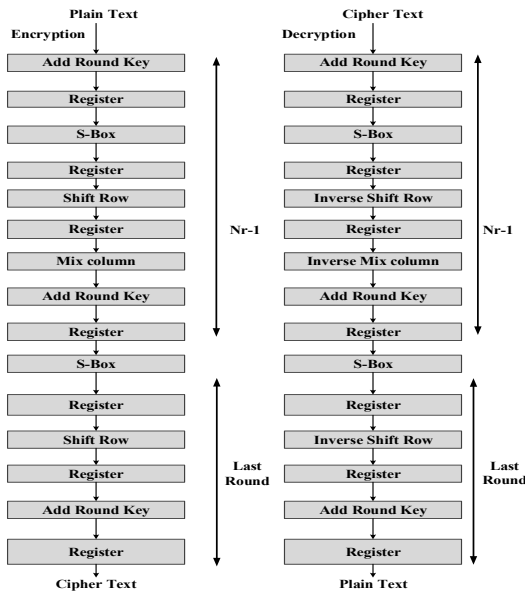


Fig. 2. Pipelined AES.

V. MIPS PROCESSOR

Fig. 3 shows the MIPS in a five-stage pipelined processor [36]. Pipelining increases the number of concurrent running instructions which in turn increases the frequency and performance. This means that the data path is separated into unlike pieces named:

- Instruction Fetch.
- Instruction Decode.

- Execution or address calculation.
- Data Memory access.
- Write Back.

MIPS is a 32-bit processor used to execute R-type, J-type, and I-type instructions [33]. Instruction format is shown in Fig. 4 MIPS instructions are word aligned meaning that the first byte of the instruction is stored at an address divisible by four. MIPS is a register-based with load/store architecture which is commonly referred to as the RISC architecture.

The Instruction fetch unit has an instruction memory module and a program counter module to read an instruction from the instruction memory and to send these contents to the decode stage which has read and write registers to read an instruction based on operands. The Execution unit is used to execute a particular instruction and places the result on the next pipeline stage. The data memory unit contains a memory unit to write the data on a particular address and the write back unit places the result back to register file.

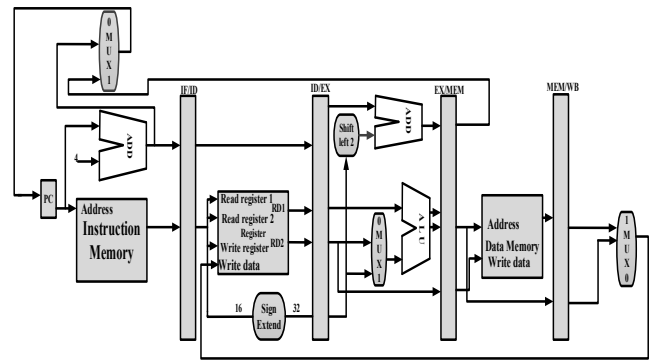


Fig. 3. Data Path of MIPS.

R-Type					
Opcode	[31-26]	rs[25-21]	rt[20-16]	rd[15-11]	shamt[10-6] function[5-0]
I-Type					
Opcode	[31-26]	rs[25-21]	rt[20-16]	Address/immediate[15-0]	
J-Type					
Opcode	[31-26]	Target address[25-0]			

Fig. 4. Instruction format.

VI. MIPS WITH PARAMETERIZED AES

In our proposed design shown in Fig. 5, we integrate the parameterized crypto co-processor based on the AES algorithm with the MIPS processor in such a way that AES is executed as the crypto co-processor. The hardware implementation using FPGA provides a significant performance gains compared to software implementation using the general purpose processor (microprocessor) in terms of parallel processing, pipelining, word size and speed. More details are shown in Table I and Table II.

Table III provides the information about the development process in terms of language, cycle, tools, and maintenance.

Pipelining and parallel processing are very limited on the general purpose processor. Throughput up to several Gbps can be easily achieved by using FPGA. The Crypto algorithm agility is also possible by using FPGA. Pipelining and parallel processing of AES are very limited on general processors because of their internal structures and fixed sizes of functional units [34]. General purpose processor is not suitable for the implementation of the cryptographic algorithms because of two reasons. First, their storage capability is limited to store key(s) in the internal register of the processor [34].

Second, if there is an attack on cache, it can affect the cryptographic algorithm. The basic entity used to implement encryption and decryption is shown in Fig. 6. The combinational logic is used to implement one round of cipher with the support of single multiplexer and a register. The two main characteristics of this architecture are as follows: one block of data is encrypted in one clock cycle and the number of clock cycles necessary to encrypt a single block of data is equal to cipher rounds.

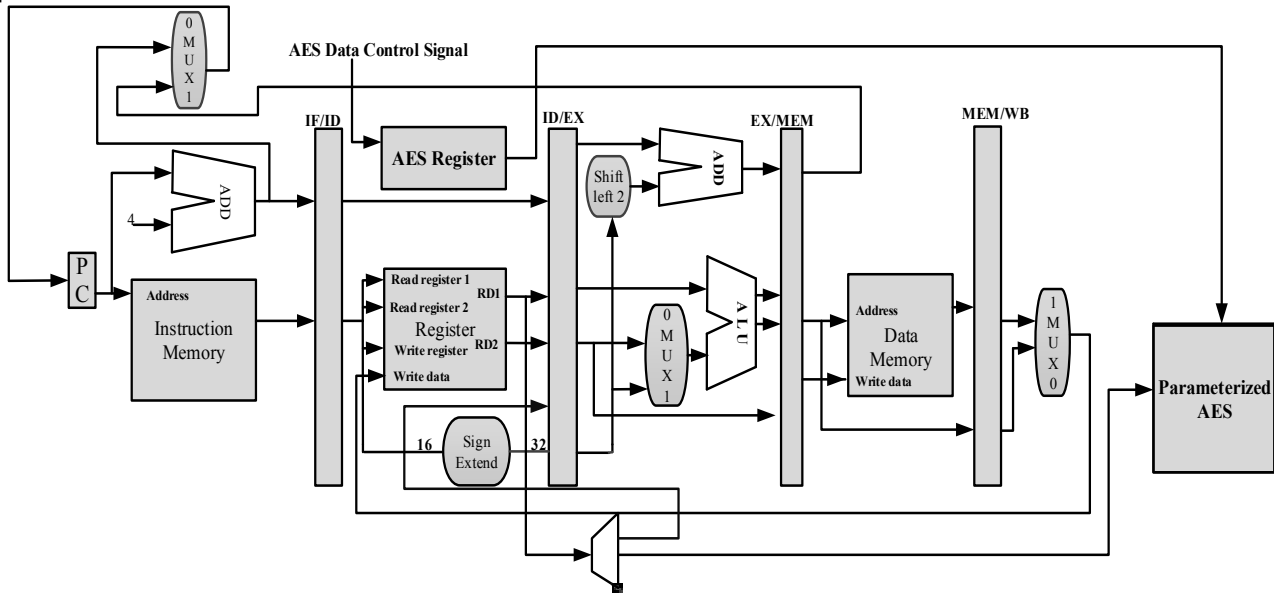


Fig. 5. Parameterized crypto processor with Processor.

Table I. Performance Characteristics of Cryptographic algorithm on FPGA and Microprocessors.

Performance Characteristics	FPGA	Microprocessor
Parallel Processing	Potential	Restricted
Pipelining	Potential	Restricted
Word Size	Adaptable	Static
Speed	Fast	Adequate Fast

Table II. Functionality of Cryptographic algorithm on FPGA and Microprocessors.

Functionality	FPGA	Microprocessor
Algorithm Agility	Potential	Potential
Tamper Resistance	Restricted	weak
Access control to Keys	moderate	weak

Table III. Development process of Cryptographic algorithm on FPGA and Microprocessors.

Development Process	FPGA	Microprocessor
Description Language	VHDL	Restricted
Design Cycle	moderately long	Short
Design Tools	moderately expensive	inexpensive
Maintenance and upgrades	inexpensive	inexpensive

Table IV. Parameterized Rounds.

AES	Number of Rounds	Parameterized Round (K)
AES-128	4	1,2,5,10
AES-192	6	1,2,3,4,6,12
AES-256	4	1,2,7,14

We propose a design called parameterized AES in which the number of rounds can be parameterized at design time according to the application requirements and constraints. The structure of the proposed design is depicted in Fig. 7. The basic difference between Fig. 6 and Fig. 7 is that the combinational part of the circuit implements K rounds, instead of a single round. K must be a divisor of the total numbers of rounds. For instance, if the design is based on AES-128 so the parameterized rounds can be 1, 2, 5, and 10. The combinational part of the circuit constitutes the majority of circuit area while the total area of the parameterized AES increases with number of rounds. Table IV shows the round values of different block sizes used in our design.

In the proposed design, the crypto instruction is fetched from the instruction memory of the MIPS processor and will be executed by the crypto co-processor (parameterized AES) as shown in Fig. 5. Thus, each crypto instruction has a constant prefix (010011) as shown in Table V which is used

by the decode stage of the processor that the execution of this instruction is on the crypto co-processor.

Table V : Crypto co-processor instruction format.

Immediate instruction	Mra	mwa	length	ecn/d ec
6-bit 010011	5-bit	5-bit	10-bit	6-bit
Register instruction	Mra	mwa	length	ecn/d ec
6-bit 010011	5-bit	5-bit	10-bit	6-bit

The crypto co-processor uses immediate and register instructions. The memory read address (mra) is the starting address of the AES memory. The AES memory unit shown in Fig. 5, where data is stored for the AES operations and the results are stored in the memory write addresses (mwa). The size of data is determined by length. The size of length in our design is 10 bit, so it ranges from one to 1024 blocks each block can support 128 bits, 192 bits and 256 bits of data.

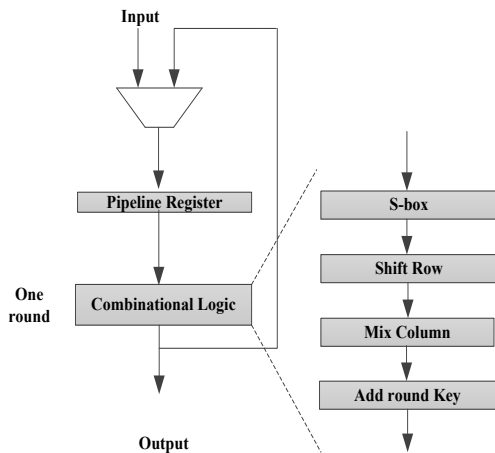


Fig. 6. Basic Iterative Architecture.

Our approach is to extend the general purpose processor with the parameterized AES crypto co-processor. If the instruction fetched from the instruction memory is a MIPS instruction, it will run on the pipeline stages of the MIPS processor (decode, execute, and write back). If the instruction is crypto-instruction it will run on the crypto co-processor. Crypto-instruction fetched from the instruction memory decoded during the decode stage and send to the crypto co-processor.

VII. EXPERIMENTAL RESULT

The proposed design is implemented on FPGA using Xilinx ISE 14.4. We evaluate the affects of different configurations (number of rounds) on area consumption, latency, memory and LUT. We run the system configured with different number of rounds for AES-128, AES-192, and AES-256. For each AES we have the same number of inputs (plaintext). After selecting (configuring) the number of rounds and the AES type, we feed these inputs to the pipeline stages of the crypto co-processor to compute the latency and throughput for each AES with the configured number of rounds. Table VI summarizes all the details of AES-128, AES-192, and AES-256 with different number of rounds. Minimum area

consumption is observed for AES-128 with 1-round AES module, and maximum area consumption is observed for AES-256 on 14-round AES module. The area (cost) totally depends on the number of rounds configured for the crypto co-processor.

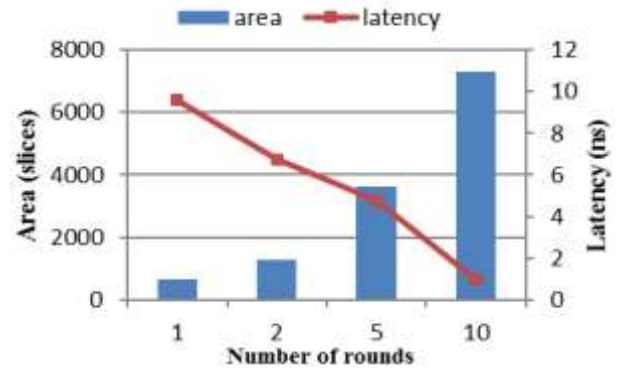


Fig. 8. Latency and area usage for different rounds for AES-128.

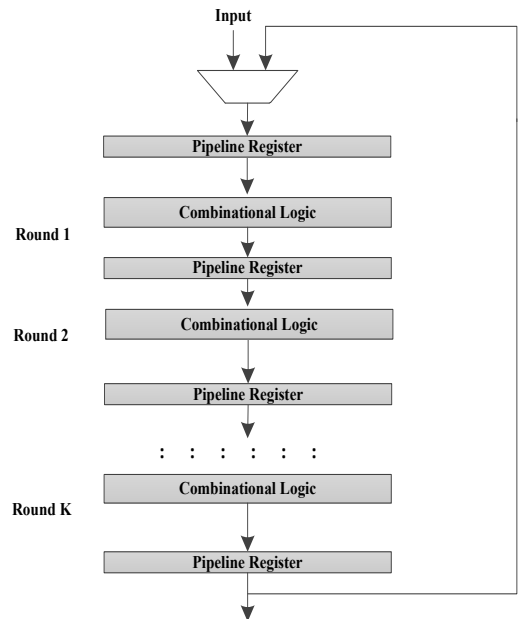


Fig. 7. Parameterized AES.

The effect of changing the number of rounds on memory and LUT usages for 1- and 2-round configurations of AES-128 is almost the same, and the maximum memory and LUT usages are observed on 14-round configuration of AES-256.

Fig. 8, Fig. 9, and Fig. 10 illustrate the area overhead and latency of AES-128, AES-192, and AES-256, respectively, in terms of the number of configured rounds. As can be seen from the results, when the number of rounds increases, the cost (area) raises significantly while the latency is reduced and throughput is increased accordingly. As shown in Fig. 11 and Fig. 12, throughput for AES-128 and AES-192 are 30 Gbps and 42 Gbps respectively and 64 Gbps for AES-256 as depicted in Fig. 13. Fig. 14 illustrates the area consumption of MIPS with AES-128.

Table VI. Comparison of AES-128, AES-192 and AES-256.

Block size	128				192				256			
Number of Rounds	Latency (ns)	Area	LUT	Memory usage KB	Latency (ns)	Area	LUT	Memory usage KB	Latency (ns)	Area	LUT	Memory usage KB
1	9.59	662	369	230564	11.508	5494	2623	277244	13.5	5228	4185	267300
2	6.75	1290	746	232420	8.71	6122	3000	289444	11	7068	5166	278500
3	-	-	-	-	4.79	6865	3466	300644	-	-	-	-
4	-	-	-	-	3.58	7843	4444	311844	-	-	-	-
5	4.75	3645	4774	272740	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	-	-	-	-	2.78	9455	5502	320932	-	-	-	-
7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6.75	11023	7741	334500
8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
10	0.959	7290	9548	545480	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
12	-	-	-	-	0.959	18910	11040	641864	-	-	-	-
13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.959	22046	15482	669000

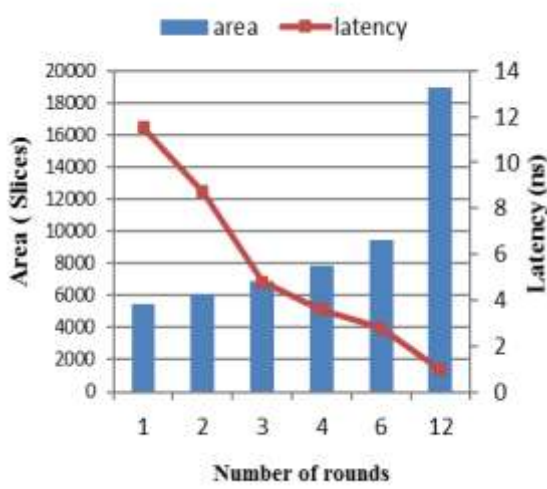


Fig. 9. Latency and area usage for different rounds for AES-192.

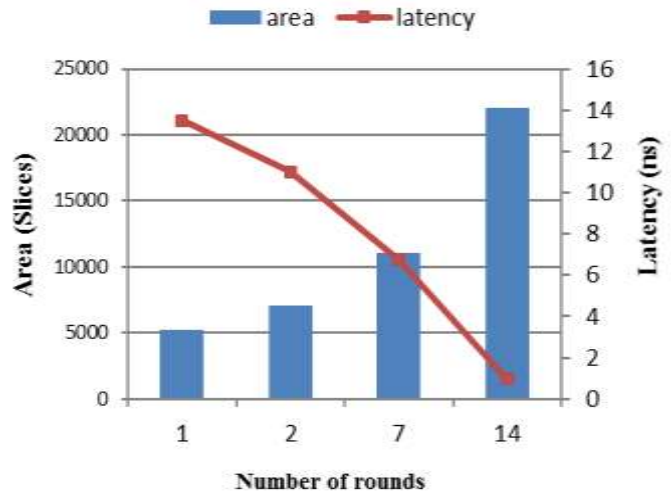


Fig. 10. Latency and area usage for different rounds for AES-256.

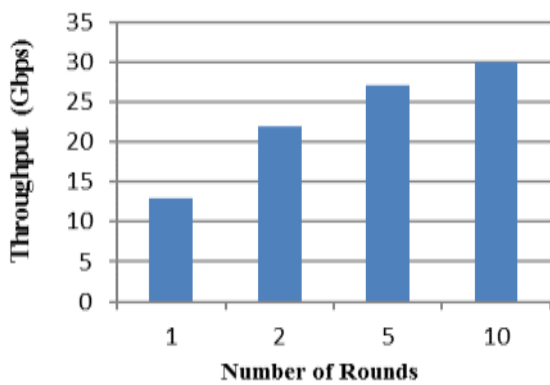


Fig. 11. Throughputs for AES-128.

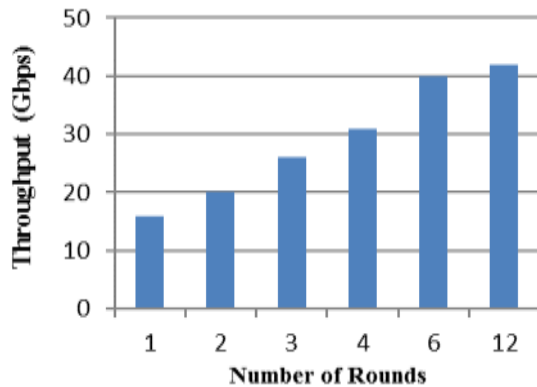


Fig. 12. Throughputs for AES-192.

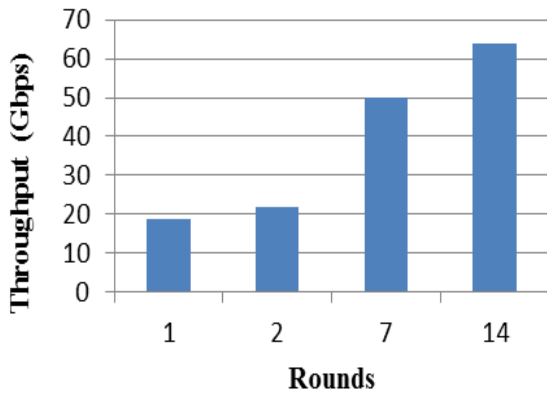


Fig. 13. Throughputs for AES-256.

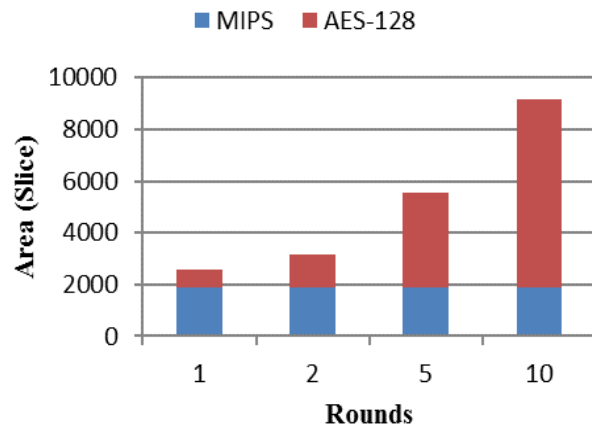


Fig. 14. MIPS with AES-128 Area Consumption.

VIII. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we proposed a parameterized crypto co-processor. The parameterized AES can encrypt and decrypt data according to the application requirements. If the requirement is to have a low-latency design, the number of rounds should be increased while if the constraint is the area utilization, the number of rounds should be reduced. Experimental results are performed to explore the effect of the round parameter on area, latency, and throughput.

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