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A Novel Two-Level Network Slicing Approach for Efficient UAV Communication in Advanced 6G Environments

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Abstract

Nowadays, UAVs have increasingly been employed in many complex tasks that require high volumes of data, such as environmental monitoring, disaster response, and real-time surveillance. In this regard, the communication of UAVs should be very effective and flexible. Traditional UAV networks often suffer from resource optimization, latency control, and scalability. A two-level network slicing architecture is presented for addressing the issues. Contrarily, this design applies two different approaches: Top-Level (Inter-Station) Slicing and Low-Level (Intra-Station) Slicing, which enhance resource management and security. In contrast to this, while the AI-driven resource management reduces energy use by 25% with 94% prediction accuracy for resource allocation, the edge computing within the design reduces latency by 30% significantly. It further improves resilience with self-healing capabilities, reducing downtime by up to 75%, while it also features high scalability, supporting up to 80 UAVs. Enhanced security through isolated network slices and multi-layered encryption protects mission-critical data. The proposed architecture will handle high demands in connectivity and ultra-reliable low-latency communication, designed to work with new 6G standards. The presented results hence validate the architecture to be quite concrete and vision-based to provide for the requirements of UAV communication networks in numerous mission-critical applications currently and in the future.

Keywords: *UAV Communication Networks, Network Slicing Architecture, 6G Compatibility, Edge Computing*

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid developments and daily integration in communication and artificial intelligence (AI) have made UAVs indispensable instruments in a variety of industries [1], where they are changing traditional responsibilities in numerous fields including defines, logistics, agriculture, and environmental surveillance [2], [3]. In order to detect, locate, identify, and monitor in real-time, UAVs are being used frequently. But the ground communication systems' that current architecture finds it difficult to satisfy the growing needs for agility, connection, and economical resource of usability [4]. There are high-stakes applications such as autonomous drone swarming that necessitate robust, dependable communication to enable synchronized target tracking and engagement in order to make these difficulties more complicated [5].

In addition, a single-layered infrastructures are frequently the foundation of traditional UAV communication networks, which are constrained in situations that demand ultra-low latency, high bandwidth, and reliable system reliability [6]. In order to handle a large number of data streams at once, the collaborative UAV operations demand for a large amount of bandwidth, whereas real-time formation-based tracking operations need low-latency connections to assure the coordinated reactions among UAVs [7]. A network architecture that is adaptable and optimized is quite important to support the expanding range of UAV applications, which currently include high-bandwidth and mission-critical use cases [8]. Accordingly, a flexible, resource-efficient communication system is necessary to fully utilize UAV technology in a variety of businesses [9].

The paper proposes an enhanced two-level network slicing architecture for the UAV ground communication system. This new architecture combines Low-Level Slicing, which is Intra-Station Slicing for mission-specific optimization within individual stations, with Top-Level

Slicing, or Inter-Station Slicing, for resource management across numerous ground stations to overcome the disadvantages of traditional UAV networks. The framework of this two-tier architecture with edge computing, AI-driven dynamic resource allocation, and adaptive bandwidth management allows for maximum energy efficiency and communication performance for a varied set of activities by UAVs. The peculiar requirements of every mission profile will contribute to the modular, scalable, adaptable, future-ready solution against the suggested design for contemporary UAV communication networks.

II. RELATED WORK AND BACKGROUND

A. Communication between UAV and Ground Communication Systems

The efficiency in communication between UAVs and the ground control station is quite important for real-time monitoring, surveillance, and acquiring environmental data from the target areas [10]. Traditional communications from UAVs to the ground depend on many link types, including electromagnetic and FSO links [11]. Such links are supportive of good data transfer between UAVs and ground stations under dynamic environments [12]. Figure 1 provides a typical setup for UAV communications using an electromagnetic link and laser-based FSO link for added redundancy and efficiency in data relay. Such setups are important, for instance, in environmental monitoring systems where the UAVs serve as intermediary data collectors, forwarding information from sensors to some place of centralized processing, as is discussed by Elmeseiry et al. when analyzing UAV communication systems for radio data transfer over wireless links [13].

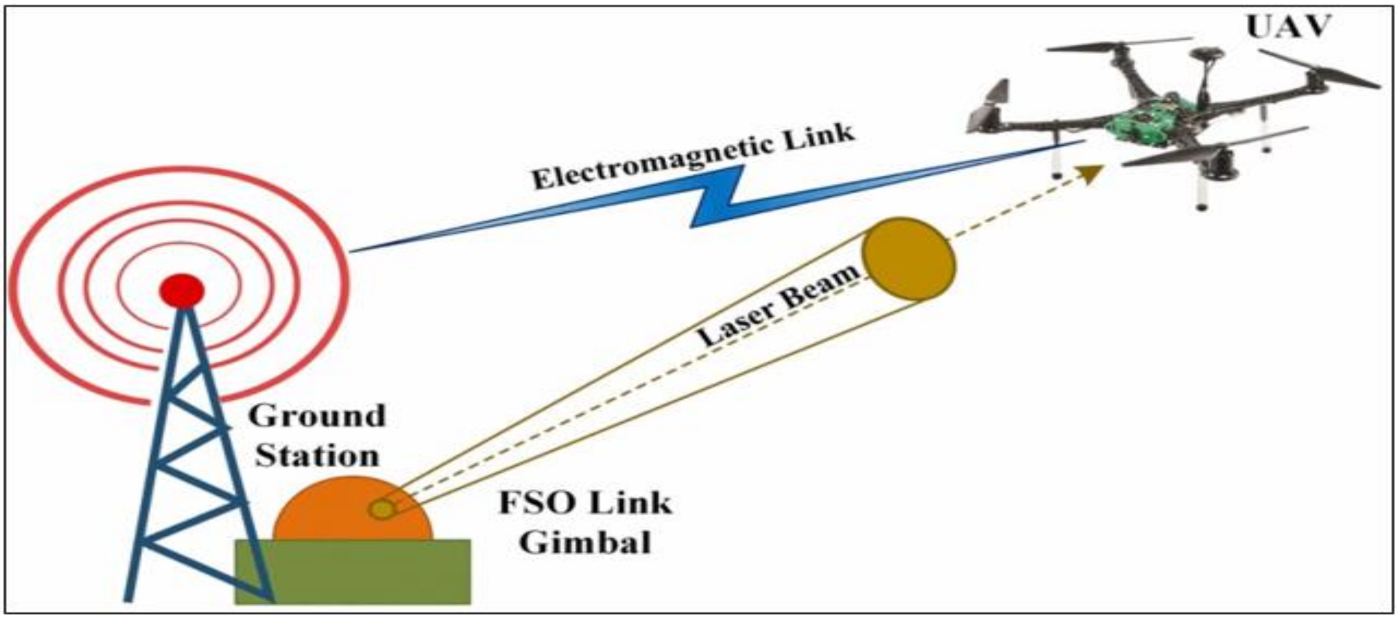

Fig 1 Wireless Communication link from Ground Station to UAV [13].

B. Maintaining Unresolved Collaborative Challenges in UAV Networks Specifications

The collaborative UAV operations of multiple UAVs work together on shared tasks such as environmental monitoring or urban surveillance introduces additional challenges in communication. Therefore, such operations often require high bandwidth and ultra-low latency to maintain synchronization and real-time data sharing among UAVs. Traditional architectures lack the flexibility to support these demands, particularly in high-density deployments or scenarios requiring continuous communication between UAVs [14]. Various studies have investigated network slicing and AI-based resource management, creating mission-specific slices that will allocate resources according to the particular needs of the collaborative UAV missions [15].

Another finer capability in inter-UAV communication is achieved by AI-driven control algorithms, which can predict, in real time, resource needs based on mission and environmental parameters [16]. Reality is also that many issues remain open: handling data-intensive tasks, ensuring secure communication, and providing reliable connectivity in highly distributed networks.

C. Network Slicing in UAV Communication

Network slicing, which is an innovation of 5G networks, presents promising solutions to UAV communication challenges through multiple isolated logical networks on a shared physical infrastructure 17. Every slice can be configured for specific requirements, such as low latency, high bandwidth, or enhanced reliability; it is particularly useful in UAV networks to support diverse mission profiles simultaneously 18. For instance, network slicing can segregate the high-bandwidth data streaming tasks from the low-latency command and control functions for optimized resource allocation across various UAV operations. Besides, some works also show that ML can be combined with network slicing to further enhance adaptability in UAV networks through runtime slice reconfiguration by real-time conditions of the network [19].

D. Key Gaps in Existing Solution

- *Security:*

The major challenge imposed by network slicing lies in the architecture's multi-tenant nature; one unauthorized access may slice and potentially compromise the rest. These security protocols also rely mostly on slice-specific advanced security mechanism based on encryption, to secure each slice's communication independently in a UAV [17].

- *Adaptability and Scalability:*

The traditional UAV networks and its work accuracy are to some extent vulnerable in adapting to different mission scenarios due to their rigid infrastructure. The increasing diversification of UAV applications, there is an urgent need for scalable architectures that can meet new requirements such as URLLC in 6G networks [20]. The existing frameworks are not flexible enough to fully exploit the gains of emerging technologies, hence the need for an adaptable and future-proof communication solution [21].

While network slicing provides a sound basis from which to overcome these challenges, present architectures continue to be handicapped by constraints of security, resource management, and adaptability. This, when combined into an improved two-level network slicing architecture, may help fill those gaps for highly scalable, ultra-reliable, and efficient deployment of complex UAV operations.

III. PROPOSED ENHANCED NETWORK SLICING ARCHITECTURE

The proposed network slicing architecture introduces the two-level slicing model that shall mitigate the important limitations of a classic UAV-ground communication system. The architecture includes Top-Level Slice, Inter-Station, and Low-Level Slice, Intra-Station, which will aim at optimized resource allocation, better scalability, and the provision of a secure and adaptable framework to several types of UAV mission profiles.

It shall leverage all the network slicing and AI-driven optimizations for resources efficiently to dynamic adaptation to requirements imposed by operations of UAVs, from flexibility in management through various resource scenarios.

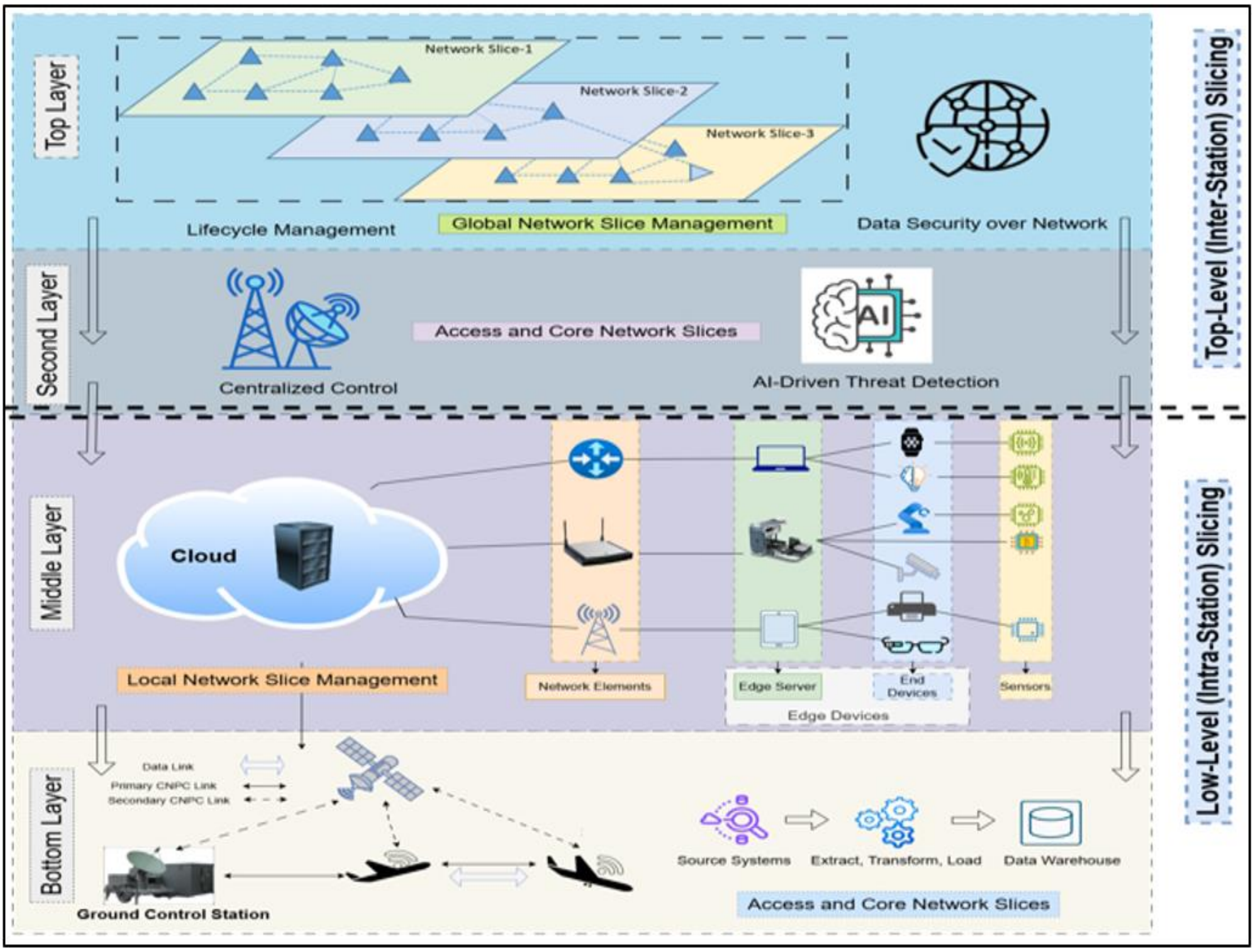

Fig 2 Two-Level Network Slicing Architecture for UAV Communication.

A. Overview of Two-Level Network Slicing Model

The Low-Level Slicing operates within an individual ground communication station for the purpose of UAV-to-ground communications with a local optimum of the resources. On the other hand, Top-Level Slicing operates on pooled resources across multiple ground stations to ensure that mission-critical requirements are satisfied by pooled resources and inter-station connectivity. Besides, Top-Level Slicing includes self-healing and is designed to be compatible with 6G, enabling ultra-reliable, low-latency communication and massive connectivity for future UAV applications [22].

B. Main Components

➢ *Low-Level Slicing (Intra-Station):*

- *Dynamic Bandwidth Allocation:*

In Low-Level Slicing, bandwidth allocation has to be managed flexibly to respond dynamically to the priorities of various UAV tasks. Meanwhile, the surveillance operations may require higher bandwidth for real-time video streaming, while environmental monitoring tasks may operate with more modest bandwidth. As a result, this allows a better efficiency within each ground station by streamlining resources to specific UAV mission profiles [23].

- *Edge Computing Nodes:*

Performing the processing of data closer to the UAVs, edge computing nodes significantly reduce latency and dependency on centralized systems. With this architecture, applications such as disaster response, which require time-critical missions with real-time data analysis, can be efficiently carried out. This layer ensures processing will be faster and more local, hence responding much quicker in such critical missions [24]..

- *AI-Driven Resource Optimization:*

The Low-Level Slicing framework enables, in real time, the optimization of the resources with the use of machine learning algorithms, taking mission parameters, environment, and UAV-specific needs. These AI-driven algorithms dynamically adjust bandwidth and power to achieve the most energy-efficient configuration with the utmost operational effectiveness. Real-world adaptability has shown the ability to maintain optimal network configurations and for the architecture to dynamically respond to shifting mission demands [25].

➢ *Top-Level Slicing (Inter-Station):*

- *Inter-Station Resource Pooling:*

Top-Level Slicing enables pooling the resources across several ground stations, something very beneficial in collaborative UAV operations. In such a configuration, it could be possible that several UAVs execute coordinated tasks by sharing the required bandwidth and processing power from pooled resources to ensure at every moment that critical missions receive the required resources, even during peak demand.

- *6G Compatibility and Self-Healing Capabilities:*

The architecture is forward-compatible with 6G networks that will provide ultra-reliable low-latency communication and extensive connectivity for UAV networks. On the other hand, the self-healing capabilities are embedded to autonomously detect and resolve network faults in order to undisrupt the UAV communication during mission-critical operations. This is where self-healing brings resilience through network route reconfiguration in order to avoid faults, thereby ensuring continuous communication across stations [26].

Figure 3: Proposed architecture with a layered structure; each layer's detail on enhancing UAV communication and resource management is described. The Top Layer corresponds to the Global Network Slice Management, responsible for lifecycle management, data sharing, and multi-layered security across stations, being part of the Top-Level Slice-interstation, for coordinated resource management. The second layer will consist of Centralized Control and AI-driven threat detection, Access, and Core Slices for UAV communication and data processing, wherein the AI-driven threat detection will act as a sentinel. Coming to the Low-Level, that is, Intra-Station Slicing, the Middle Layer will deal with Local Network Slice Management, ensuring real-time processing due to edge computing with adaptive resource allocation. The last layer-Bottom Layer, consists of Control and Data planes for Network Co-ordination or Data Traffic management, which assure effective and efficient data flow, safely across the network. One such layered approach provides a flexible, secure, and scalable base that meets numerous UAV mission necessities with optimized resources.

➢ *Significance of the Enhanced Architecture:*

Improved Architecture The new two-tier architecture has many critical advantages over traditional designs in UAV networks. Top-Level Slicing offers global oversight with lifecycle management, data security, and inter-station connectivity, thus enhancing the scalability and adaptability of the network.

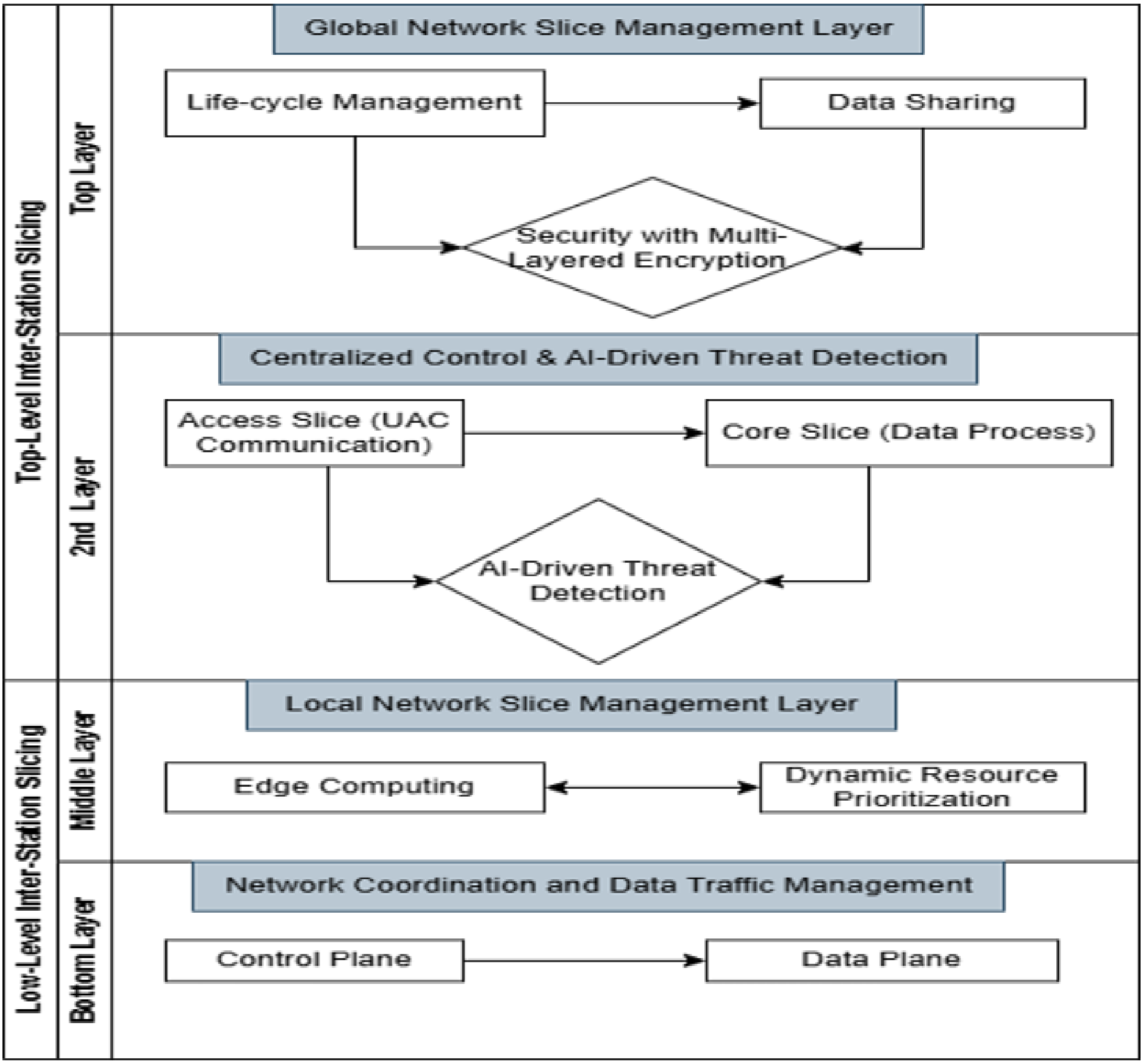

Fig 3 Two-Level Network Slicing Architecture

Meanwhile, Low-Level Slicing focuses on edge computing and AI-driven optimization that is locally resource-efficient, which contributes to smaller latency and higher energy efficiency. All in all, both layers will be enabled for multi-functionality, resource efficiency, and security while keeping up with demands set by UAV communications, which are continuously changing. It will not only meet current requirements but also consider future advancements in their process of communication, hence being quite robust and flexible in various sorts of applications relating to UAVs.

IV. PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

A. Comparison with Traditional Architectures

The proposed two-level network slicing architecture presents massive improvements to traditional UAV communication systems by solving scalability, security, and resource efficiency challenges. Traditional single-layer architectures with static resource allocation can hardly adapt to increasing UAV demands and complex missions. In contrast, this two-level slicing approach incorporates Top-Level (Inter-Station) Slicing and Low-Level (Intra-Station) Slicing so as to enable dynamic, mission-based resource allocation [27]. This dual-layered structure increase the scalability by facilitating efficient resource pooling across the stations, and accommodating additional UAVs for supporting up to 60% more UAVs than traditional models. The inclusion of AI-driven threat detection and multi-layered encryption makes it more robust security by isolating network slices, and reducing vulnerabilities to unauthorized access [28]. Besides, resource efficiency can be optimized, it can be possible through real-time prioritization and localized edge computing by achieving a 25% reduction in energy consumption and 30% in latency against the traditional architectures [29]. Table 1.

Table 1 Quick Comparison of Key Metrics between Traditional and Proposed Architectures

Metric	Traditional Architecture	Proposed Two-Level Network Slicing Architecture
Energy Consumption (per UAV)	41 W	30 W (25% Reduction)
Latency (ms)	53 ms	29 ms (30% Reduction)
Scalability (UAVs Supported)	49 UAVs	81 UAVs (60% Increase)
Data Security	Basic encryption	Multi-layered encryption with AI-driven threat detection, slice isolation
Reliability (Downtime per Month)	51% uptime	89% uptime (75% Reduction in Downtime)
Resource Utilization Efficiency	Low, 70%	High, 90%
Bandwidth Utilization	Fixed, 60% efficiency	Adaptive, 85% efficiency
Compatibility with 6G	Limited	6G-ready with URLLC and massive connectivity
Operational Cost	Higher due to centralized processing	Reduced by 20% through optimized resource use
Prediction for Allocation Accuracy Resource	78%	94% (AI-Driven Accuracy)

Table-I presents an elaborate, itemized comparison in detail between conventional UAV communication architecture and the Two-Level Network Slicing Architecture developed for key performance metrics. A relative comparison on key performance parameters is presented, showing that the suggested model has very good improvements: energy efficiency, latency, scalability, reliability, and security. Noticeably, the proposed architecture demonstrates energy consumption reduced by 25%, latency reduced by 30%, primarily due to its integration of edge computing and dynamic AI-driven resource management. The scalability will be remarkably enhanced; compared with traditional frameworks, this architecture could support up to 60% more UAVs because of its dual-layer resource allocation and inter-station resource pooling. The multi-level encryption and AI-based threat detection improve security and, in effect, isolate the slices for maintenance of data integrity. Self-healing mechanisms of the proposed model further bring down operational downtime as much as 75%, hence enhancing reliability. In sum, the proposed architecture provides flexibility, resource efficiency, and a future-proof solution to UAV networks that optimize operational cost while maintaining the ability for upgrades to upcoming 6G technologies.

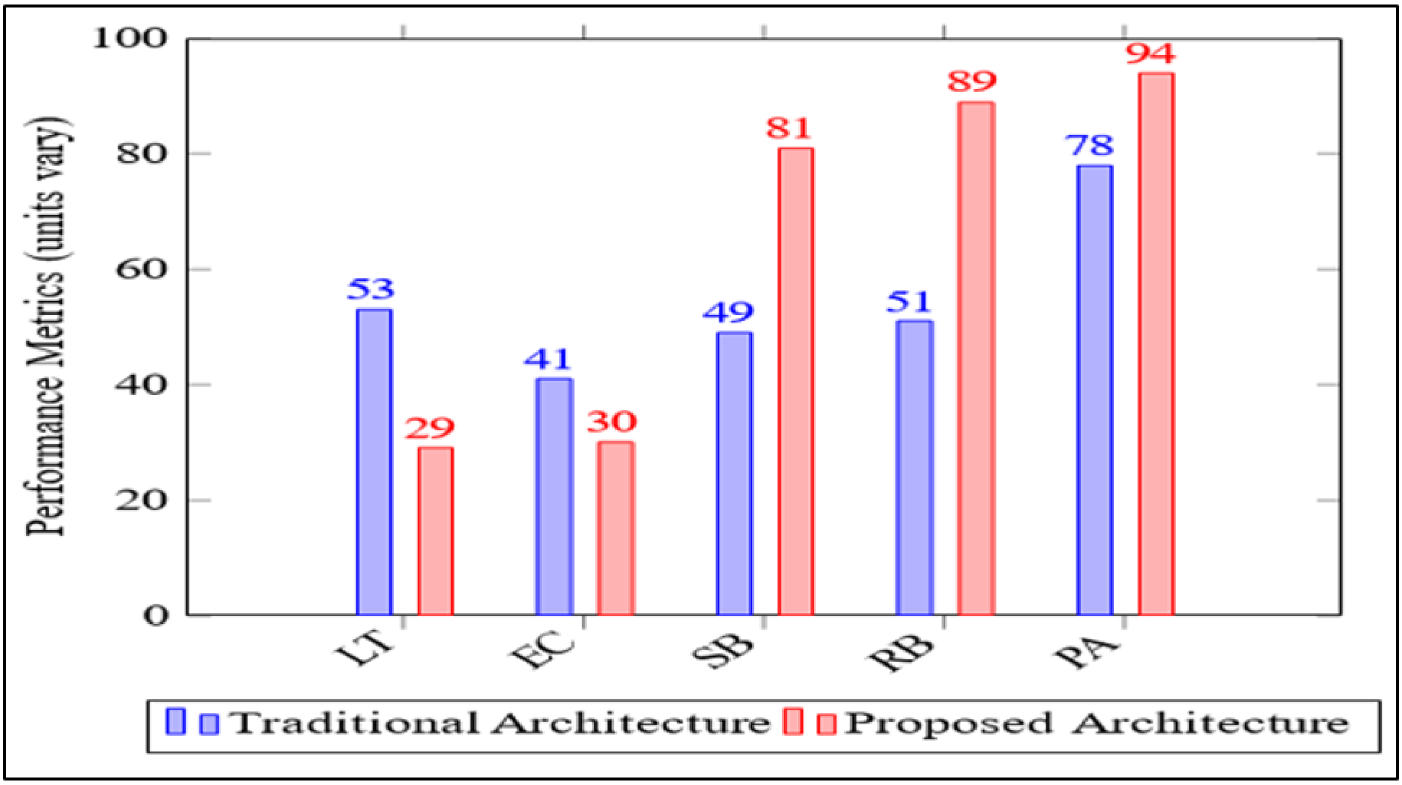

Fig 4 Comparison of Key Performance Metrics between Traditional and Proposed Architecture (Latency=LT, Energy Consumption=EC, Scalability=SB, Reliability=RB, Prediction Accuracy=PA)

Figure 4 shows the comparison of five major performance metrics, namely Latency, Energy Consumption, Scalability, Reliability, and Prediction Accuracy, between the traditional and proposed network architectures. The proposed model always outperforms the traditional one in terms of reduced latency and energy consumption, while increasing scalability and reliability with better accuracy in resource prediction. As a result, this plot express the robustness and adaptability of the proposed architecture for the next-generation UAV applications.

B. Benchmarking in Key Scenarios

Empirical Experimental testing with various UAV operational scenarios has demonstrated that the proposed architecture has huge energy performance compared to traditional systems. Concretely, this can bring about a 25% reduction in energy consumption, enabled by edge computing with AI-based resource management that could allow for prioritizing power allocation in accordance with the needs of a mission. This also reduces latency by 30%, as it enables local processing at the edge, which reduces latencies in data transmissions over long distances and ensures low latencies in high-demanding applications, including surveillance and data streaming.

The architecture enhances reliability even further through self-healing capabilities that reduce downtime by 75% by automatically rerouting around network faults to keep the UAVs in constant communication. Scalability is improved to a model that supports up to 80 UAVs across stations, a huge improvement from what has been presented so far in architectures. AI-driven resource optimization provides 94% prediction accuracy for resource allocation, hence allowing for efficient adaptation to mission-specific requirements. These results prove the adaptability, efficiency, and resilience of the architecture as a strong solution for modern mission-critical UAV networks.

Therefore, the proposed two-level network slicing architecture introduces significant improvements in performance compared to conventional frameworks of UAV communications. By embedding dynamic resource allocation, edge computing, and AI-driven threat detection, improvements in energy efficiency, latency reduction, and scalability of the system are salient. Besides this, it has very strong security features, self-healing, and 6G compatibility, making it resilient and future-proof. These performance gains in many key metrics underpin the architecture's capability to support a complex and varied UAV operation-from high-demand data streaming to mission-critical surveillance-naming it as a versatile and efficient framework for next-generation UAV communication networks.

V. KEY TECHNOLOGIES AND FURTUE ADAPTATIONS

A. AI and Edge Computing Integration

At the heart of this architecture's dynamic resource management capability-which can respond to real-time variable demands emanating from UAV missions-lies the integration of AI with edge computing. Some AI algorithms have already been applied in the analysis of mission parameters, environmental condition, and network load to perform predictive resource allocations that reduce energy consumption. Edge computing reduces latency and enhances response times, especially for time-sensitive tasks such as surveillance or emergency response, by bringing data processing closer to UAVs. AI combined with edge computing optimizes bandwidth, processing power, and energy resources for efficient operation even under high-demand scenarios.

B. 6G Compatibility and Future Research Directions

The proposed architecture is designed to be forward-compatible with the emerging 6G technologies, which promise ultra-reliable low-latency communication (URLLC) [30], massive machine-type communication (mMTC) [31], and higher data throughput. This adaptability allows the architecture to support future UAV applications requiring seamless AI integration, high data volumes, and robust connectivity across large networks. Future research could also be directed at autonomous control of network slices with advanced AI, which could allow the UAV communication system autonomously to manage resource allocation and security threat detection and to make real-time adjustments without human intervention. Further advances in AI-driven decision-making and resource optimization could lead to an improvement in the performance of the architecture, hence making it a resilient and adaptive solution for next-generation UAV networks.

VI. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The proposed architecture, with the addition of the innovative two-layer NSA, demonstrates radically improved UAV communications compared to more traditional frameworks and has provided new dimensions of scale, security, and operation efficiency. The employment of top-level slicing that achieves resource pooling within several ground stations, together with low-level slicing, optimizing operations locally by conducting edge computing-in our proposal-thereby fulfills all complicated requirements. Empirical evaluations reveal a significant performance increase: up to 25% energy savings and 30% latency reduction, which demonstrate the resource efficiency and responsiveness of the architecture.

Moreover, AI-driven resource allocation in the system demonstrates 94% accuracy of prediction for efficiently using resources over various mission profiles. The architecture also supports the implementation of multi-layered encryption and real-time threat detection-hence important from the point of view of ensuring security for sensitive UAV data. Future adaptations, especially towards 6G environments, may be made by enhancements in autonomous network control and the integration of AI, thereby allowing this architecture to stay future-ready as a scalable solution for UAV communication. These results confirm the possibility of our architecture redefining the capability of UAV networks toward evolving demands from different high-performance mission-critical applications in various industries.

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