Power System Protection and Control
ISSN:1674-3415

DIGITAL TWIN–RAM CO-SIMULATION FOR MAINTENANCE AND SPARING DECISIONS IN PROCESS FACILITIES

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Recevied: 20 November 2024 **Revised**: 20 December 2023 **Accepted**: 25 January 2024

ABSTRACT

Maintenance scheduling and spare-parts inventory planning in process facilities depend critically on accurate, dynamically updated reliability, availability, and maintainability (RAM) models. Static RAM analyses — computed once from historical failure data and applied unchanged across multi-year planning horizons — fail to reflect the evolving condition of assets, the consequences of actual maintenance decisions, and the stochastic interaction between equipment failure events and spare-parts stockout risks. This paper presents a Digital Twin (DT)–RAM co-simulation framework that couples a physics-informed Bayesian RAM model with a high-fidelity Monte Carlo co-simulation engine to provide continuously updated, probabilistically rigorous inputs to maintenance scheduling and spare-parts optimisation. The DT layer ingests real-time condition-monitoring (CM) sensor streams, CMMS work-order records, and inventory transaction data to update Weibull failure-rate posteriors on both a quarterly calendar cycle and an event-triggered basis, while the Monte Carlo co-simulation propagates these posteriors into system-level availability forecasts, spare-parts demand distributions, and total maintenance cost trajectories. A stochastic spare-parts optimisation module derives dynamic reorder points and stock levels that minimise the joint probability of stockout and excess carrying cost under the updated posteriors. The framework is validated at a heavy petrochemical olefins complex in India across a 36-month monitoring and 24-month forecasting window covering 47 critical rotating and static equipment items. Results demonstrate a 78.7% reduction in availability forecast RMSE relative to static RAM, a 15.7% reduction in total maintenance and sparing cost, and a 67% mean reduction in critical-spare stockout events. The framework is directly compatible with SAP PM and OSIsoft PI data architectures and meets ISO 55000-aligned asset management requirements.

Keywords: *Digital twin; RAM analysis; co-simulation; spare parts optimisation; Bayesian updating; maintenance scheduling; Monte Carlo simulation; process facilities; availability forecasting; ISO 55000*

INTRODUCTION

Process facilities — oil refineries, petrochemical plants, gas processing complexes, and power generation stations — operate under intense commercial pressure to maximise asset availability while minimising the total cost of ownership. The maintenance and sparing strategy adopted for critical equipment has a direct and quantifiable impact on both objectives: aggressive preventive maintenance reduces unplanned downtime but incurs high direct costs, while a reactive strategy minimises planned maintenance cost at the expense of costly unplanned production outages and spare-parts stockout risk [1,2]. Rational optimisation of this trade-off requires a quantitative model that accurately forecasts equipment failure rates, availability, and spare-parts demand under realistic operational conditions.

Reliability, Availability, and Maintainability (RAM) analysis provides the standard quantitative framework for this purpose. In its conventional static form, RAM analysis derives Weibull or exponential failure-rate parameters from historical CMMS records and uses these to compute steady-state and instantaneous availability, MTBF, and MTTR for individual equipment items and integrated systems [3]. These outputs are

then used to size spare-parts inventories, set preventive maintenance intervals, and prioritise investment in redundancy. However, static RAM analysis suffers from two fundamental limitations that reduce its practical utility for dynamic operational decision-making. First, it is computed once from historical data and applied unchanged across a planning horizon of months or years, during which the actual condition and failure behaviour of assets may evolve substantially. Second, it treats equipment failure events and spare-parts availability as independent processes, ignoring the critical coupling between them: a stockout at the moment of failure extends effective mean time to repair (MTTR) in a manner that static RAM models cannot represent [4].
Digital twin (DT) technology offers a principled framework for addressing both limitations. A digital twin is a continuously updated virtual representation of a physical asset that mirrors its current state through real-time data integration and uses this representation to predict future behaviour and support operational decisions [5,6]. The integration of DT technology with probabilistic RAM modelling — which we term DT–RAM co-simulation — enables continuous updating of failure-rate posteriors from CM sensor streams and CMMS data, dynamic propagation of updated reliability parameters into availability forecasts through Monte Carlo simulation, and real-time optimisation of spare-parts reorder points and maintenance intervals under the evolving posterior. The present paper develops and validates such a framework at a heavy petrochemical facility across a three-year validation period.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Digital Twins in Asset Management and Reliability

The concept of the digital twin, formalised by Grieves [7] in the context of product lifecycle management, has been adopted across aerospace, defence, and process industries as a paradigm for asset health monitoring and predictive maintenance. In the reliability domain, Ritto and Rochinha [8] demonstrated that continuous model updating through a physics-informed digital twin reduced remaining useful life prediction error by 38% relative to static physics models. Tao et al. [9] provided a comprehensive taxonomy of DT architectures across manufacturing and process applications. A critical gap identified in the literature — directly addressed in the present work — is the systematic integration of DT condition updates with stochastic spare-parts inventory optimisation, rather than treating maintenance scheduling and sparing as decoupled downstream activities.

2.2 Dynamic RAM Modelling and Bayesian Updating

Conventional static RAM analysis, as codified in IEC 60300-3-4 and ISO 14224, provides time-averaged reliability parameters suitable for initial design analysis but poorly suited to operational decision-making over short to medium horizons [10]. Dynamic extension through Bayesian updating has been demonstrated by Hamada et al. [11] and, in the process industry context, by Peng et al. [12], who showed that quarterly Bayesian updates of Weibull parameters reduced availability forecast error by 31% relative to annually updated static models. The present work extends this approach by coupling it with a DT architecture that enables sub-quarterly event-triggered updates driven by CM feature anomalies, reducing latency between condition change and model revision from months to days.

2.3 Spare Parts Optimisation Under Uncertainty

Spare-parts inventory management for capital-intensive process equipment differs fundamentally from commodity inventory management due to high unit cost, long lead times, and low demand rates. The classic (s, S) min-max policy provides a tractable but suboptimal heuristic that ignores the stochastic interaction between failure rates and lead-time demand [13]. Stochastic spare-parts models based on compound Poisson demand processes have been developed to address this limitation [14], but are typically calibrated from historical data without incorporating evolving failure-rate information from updated reliability models. The present framework closes this gap by deriving spare-parts demand distributions directly from quarterly-updated Weibull posteriors, enabling reorder points to reflect current asset condition rather than historical average failure rates.

2.4 Monte Carlo Co-Simulation for Availability Modelling

Monte Carlo simulation has long been used for system-level availability analysis, particularly for systems with complex maintenance interactions, shared resources, and stochastic logistics [15]. Co-simulation — the coupled

Power System Protection and Control
ISSN:1674-3415

execution of two or more simulation models exchanging state information at synchronisation points — enables the integration of equipment-level reliability models with logistics and supply chain models operating on different timescales [16]. Baraldi et al. [17] demonstrated that coupling equipment reliability models with spare-parts logistics models improved availability forecast accuracy by 22% relative to decoupled approaches. The present paper extends this concept to the digital twin paradigm, enabling real-time data integration to drive both the equipment-level reliability model and the system-level Monte Carlo simulation engine simultaneously.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 DT–RAM Co-Simulation Architecture

The proposed framework comprises five coupled modules executing within a unified operational loop (Figure 1, Panel A). The Physical Asset Layer provides real-time sensor streams and CMMS event records. The Sensor and CMMS Data Ingestion module pre-processes sensor features and extracts corrective maintenance events, applying delay-category annotations to separate active repair time from administrative, logistic, and access delays [4]. The RAM/Weibull Updater implements Bayesian posterior updating of Weibull parameters. The DT Monte Carlo Simulation Engine executes system-level availability forecasts. The Sparing and PM Decision module translates simulation outputs into actionable reorder points, PM intervals, and inspection priorities. Decision outputs feed back to the Physical Asset Layer through executed maintenance actions and procurement orders, closing the co-simulation loop.

3.2 Bayesian RAM Updating

Failure times are modelled using a Weibull distribution parameterized by shape $\beta$and scale η. The Bayesian posterior distribution over $(\beta, \eta)$is updated from observed failure times and right-censored observations using a log-normal parameterization with informative priors derived either from generic reliability databases (e.g., OREDA 2015) or from physics-based simulation:

$$\log \beta \sim \mathcal{N}(\log \beta_0, \sigma_\beta^2), \log \eta \sim \mathcal{N}(\log \eta_0, \sigma_\eta^2) \quad (1)$$

Between quarterly posterior updates, continuous condition-monitoring (CM) sensor streams provide a likelihood augmentation mechanism enabling early detection of accelerating degradation trends prior to formal CMMS failure registration:

$$\ln L_{\text{aug}} = \ln L_{\text{Weibull}} + \lambda_{\text{cm}} \sum_k \frac{(x_{\text{obs}}(t_k) - x_{\text{model}}(t_k, \beta, \eta))^2}{\sigma_{\text{cm}}^2} \quad (2)$$

where $x_{\text{obs}}(t_k)$ denotes the observed condition-monitoring feature at time t_k, $x_{\text{model}}(t_k, \beta, \eta)$ is the corresponding model-predicted feature trajectory, $\sigma_{\text{cm}}^2$is the condition-monitoring measurement noise variance, and $\lambda_{\text{cm}}$is a regularization coefficient governing the influence of sensor-derived information on the posterior update.

A soft-update threshold mechanism triggers full MCMC re-sampling whenever the augmented log-likelihood deviates from the quarterly baseline by more than three standard deviations. This strategy enables adaptive sub-quarterly posterior updates during anomalous condition-monitoring behaviour without incurring the computational cost associated with continuous Bayesian re-sampling.

3.3 Monte Carlo Co-Simulation Engine

The Digital Twin (DT) simulation engine executes $N = 50{,}000$Monte Carlo realizations over a forecast horizon of $T = 24$months. Failure times for all Jequipment items are sampled from their current Weibull posterior predictive distributions:

$$t_{f,j} \sim \text{Weibull}(\beta_j, \eta_j), (\beta_j, \eta_j) \sim p(\beta_j, \eta_j \mid \text{data}_j) \quad (3)$$

DOI: 10.46121/pspc.52.1.7

Power System Protection and Control
ISSN:1674-3415

Effective repair times incorporate a downtime penalty structure that captures stochastic delays arising from maintenance window constraints, crew-availability queues, spare-parts lead times, and safety permitting requirements:

$$D_{\text{eff},j} = T_{r,j}\left(1 + \sum_{k} \alpha_{k,j} X_{k,j}\right) \text{[Effective downtime model]} \quad (4)$$

where $T_{r,j}$ is the nominal repair duration for equipment item j, $\alpha_{k,j}$ denotes the sensitivity coefficient associated with disruption factor k, and $X_{k,j}$ represents the corresponding stochastic delay variable.

System availability $A(t)$ is computed at each simulation time step as the fraction of realizations in which the system remains operational. Spare-parts demand within each realization is modelled as a compound Poisson process whose rate parameter is derived from the posterior failure-rate distributions, while lead-time demand is sampled from the empirical spare-parts lead-time distribution.

3.4 Stochastic Spare Parts Optimisation

The reorder point r_j and order-up-to inventory level S_j for spare-part class j are optimized to minimize the expected total cost per unit time, consisting of holding cost c_h, ordering cost c_o, and stockout cost c_s:

$$\min_{r,S} \ \mathbb{E}[\text{TC}] = c_h \ \mathbb{E}[\text{OH}] + c_o \ \mathbb{E}[N_{\text{orders}}] + c_s \ \mathbb{E}[N_{\text{stockouts}}] \quad (5)$$

where $\mathbb{E}[\text{OH}]$ denotes expected on-hand inventory, $\mathbb{E}[N_{\text{orders}}]$ is the expected number of replenishment orders, and $\mathbb{E}[N_{\text{stockouts}}]$ represents the expected number of stockout events.

These expectations are estimated from the Monte Carlo co-simulation outputs using the Sample Average Approximation (SAA) method.

The principal innovation of the framework lies in coupling the spare-parts inventory policy directly to dynamically updated reliability forecasts. Specifically, the failure-rate inputs to the spare-parts demand process are drawn from the quarterly updated Weibull posterior distributions rather than from static historical average demand rates.

Consequently, as the posterior failure probability of a specific asset increases in response to observed degradation patterns, the associated spare-parts reorder point is automatically adjusted upward without requiring manual intervention, thereby enabling condition-adaptive inventory management.

EXPERIMENTAL SETUP AND VALIDATION

4.1 Study Facility and Asset Population

The framework was validated at a heavy olefins petrochemical complex in Vadodara, Gujarat, India, operated under a continuous 24/7 production regime. The study population comprised 47 critical equipment items spanning rotating equipment (centrifugal pumps, reciprocating compressors, gas turbines, agitators), static equipment (heat exchangers, pressure vessels), and critical instrumented systems (control and ESD valves). Equipment items were selected based on criticality ranking under the facility's ISO 31000-aligned asset criticality assessment, encompassing all items classified as Critical or Important. A 36-month baseline window (January 2020 to December 2022) established initial RAM parameters; the 24-month validation window (January 2023 to December 2023) served as the held-out period for forecast accuracy assessment.

4.2 DT Infrastructure and Data Integration

The DT infrastructure was built on a cloud-hosted Azure Digital Twins instance integrated with the facility's OSIsoft PI historian (sensor data) and SAP PM CMMS (maintenance records) through OPC-UA and REST API connectors. CM sensor data comprising vibration RMS, bearing temperature, and motor current signatures were ingested at 15-minute intervals for all 28 rotating equipment items. Inventory transaction data from the SAP MM warehouse management module were ingested daily to update the on-hand and on-order inventory state for 312 spare-part line items. The Bayesian RAM updater and Monte Carlo co-simulation engine were implemented in Python 3.11 using PyMC 5.6, deployed as containerised microservices on Azure Kubernetes Service with quarterly automated re-fitting cycles and event-triggered soft updates.

4.3 Benchmark Scenarios and Metrics

Five benchmark scenarios were evaluated progressing from a no-DT static RAM baseline (S0) through incremental additions of DT capability to the full proposed DT co-simulation framework (S4). Each scenario was evaluated over the 24-month validation window on the same held-out data using availability forecast RMSE, total maintenance and sparing cost index (normalised to S0 = 100), and critical-spare stockout event count as primary performance metrics. All experiments were conducted in triplicate with different random seeds to assess output variance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Scenario Comparison

Table 1 presents the comparative performance of all five benchmark scenarios. The full DT co-simulation (S4) achieved the highest predicted availability of 96.1%, the lowest cost index of 84.3 (a 15.7-point reduction from the S0 baseline), and the lowest availability forecast RMSE of 2.3%. The incremental improvements from S0 through S4 demonstrate the additive value of each DT capability layer: Bayesian RAM updating alone (S1) contributed 1.7 percentage points improvement in predicted availability; real-time CM integration (S2) added a further 1.2 percentage points; and the full DT co-simulation with dynamic sparing optimisation (S4) delivered the largest single-scenario cost reduction (5.3 points from S3 to S4), attributable to the stochastic spare-parts optimisation replacing the fixed reorder-point policy.

Table 1. Comparative performance of DT–RAM co-simulation scenarios: availability, total cost index, and availability forecast RMSE across five progressive capability configurations.

Scenario	DT Fidelity	Sparing Policy	PM Strategy	Avail. (%)	Cost Index	RMSE (%)
S0 — Static RAM	None	Min-max fixed	Time-based fixed	91.4	100.0	10.8
S1 — Bayes RAM	Low (RAM update only)	Min-max fixed	Time-based fixed	93.1	97.2	7.4
S2 — CM + Bayes	Medium (CM stream)	Reorder-point model	Condition-based PM	94.3	93.8	5.1
S3 — Partial DT	High (partial DT)	Stochastic opt.	Risk-based inspection	95.2	89.6	3.7
S4 — Full DT (prop.)	Full co-simulation	DT-driven dynamic	DT prognostic PM	96.1	84.3	2.3

Cost Index normalised to S0 (static RAM baseline = 100). RMSE = availability forecast root mean squared error vs. observed 24-month availability. Values are means over three Monte Carlo replication runs. DT = Digital Twin; CM = condition monitoring; PM = preventive maintenance.

The RMSE reduction from 10.8% (S0) to 2.3% (S4) represents a 78.7% improvement in forecast accuracy, substantially exceeding the 31% improvement reported by Peng et al. [12] for quarterly Bayesian-only updates, and attributable primarily to the continuous CM-triggered soft updates and the Monte Carlo co-simulation of the sparing–maintenance coupling. The cost index reduction of 15.7 points corresponds to an estimated annual saving of approximately INR 47.3 crore (approximately USD 5.7 million) at the study facility.

DOI: 10.46121/pspc.52.1.7

Power System Protection and Control
ISSN:1674-3415

5.2 Spare Parts Optimisation Results

Table 2 presents the DT-optimised spare-parts stocking levels for seven representative spare-part classes compared with static min-max policy levels. Across all seven classes, the DT-optimised policy achieved simultaneous reductions in both stockout risk (55–71% reduction) and carrying cost (26–48% reduction) relative to the static policy. This simultaneous improvement in both objectives demonstrates that the conventional stockout-versus-carrying-cost trade-off assumption is not inviolable when the demand model is driven by an accurate, up-to-date failure-rate posterior rather than a static historical average.

Table 2. Spare parts stocking optimisation results: DT co-simulation optimised stock levels vs. static min-max policy, with stockout risk and carrying cost reductions.

Spare Part Class	Criticality	Static Stock (units)	DT-Opt. Stock (units)	Stockout Risk ↓	Carrying Cost ↓
High-speed pump casing	Critical	4	2	↓ 71%	↓ 38%
Reciprocating comp. valve	Critical	3	2	↓ 64%	↓ 29%
Seal and gasket kit	Non-critical	8	5	↓ 48%	↓ 43%
Bearing assembly (std.)	Critical	6	4	↓ 67%	↓ 31%
Control valve actuator	Important	3	2	↓ 55%	↓ 26%
Impeller (standard grade)	Non-critical	5	3	↓ 52%	↓ 41%
HV motor (315 kW)	Critical	2	1	↓ 69%	↓ 48%

Stockout risk = probability of stockout during a replenishment lead-time period. Carrying cost = annualised inventory holding cost at standard facility cost-of-capital rate (12% p.a.). All reductions expressed relative to static min-max policy baseline.

The largest absolute stock reductions occurred for seal-and-gasket kits and impeller assemblies (non-critical parts for which the static policy maintained large safety stocks to cover demand uncertainty), and for HV motors (critical parts for which DT-accurate failure-rate posteriors enabled precisely timed replenishment). For critical rotating equipment spares — high-speed pump casings and bearing assemblies — the DT model achieved one-unit stock reductions while simultaneously improving stockout protection, by timing replenishment orders to match the updated failure-rate forecast precisely rather than relying on fixed reorder points calibrated from mean historical demand.

5.3 DT Architecture and RMSE Convergence

Figure 1 provides three complementary visualisations of the framework. Panel A illustrates the five-module DT co-simulation architecture and its feedback loop structure, showing how updated reliability posteriors flow from the RAM/Weibull Updater into the Monte Carlo Simulation Engine and how decision outputs feed back to the physical asset layer through executed maintenance actions and procurement orders. Panel B presents the availability optimisation heatmap across 49 PM-interval × sparing-level combinations generated from the Monte Carlo co-simulation. The DT-optimal configuration (white star, PM interval 2,500 hours, 3 spare units) achieves the highest predicted availability, confirming that the trade-off surface has a well-defined maximum recoverable through co-simulation but not identifiable from static RAM analysis.

DOI: 10.46121/pspc.52.1.7

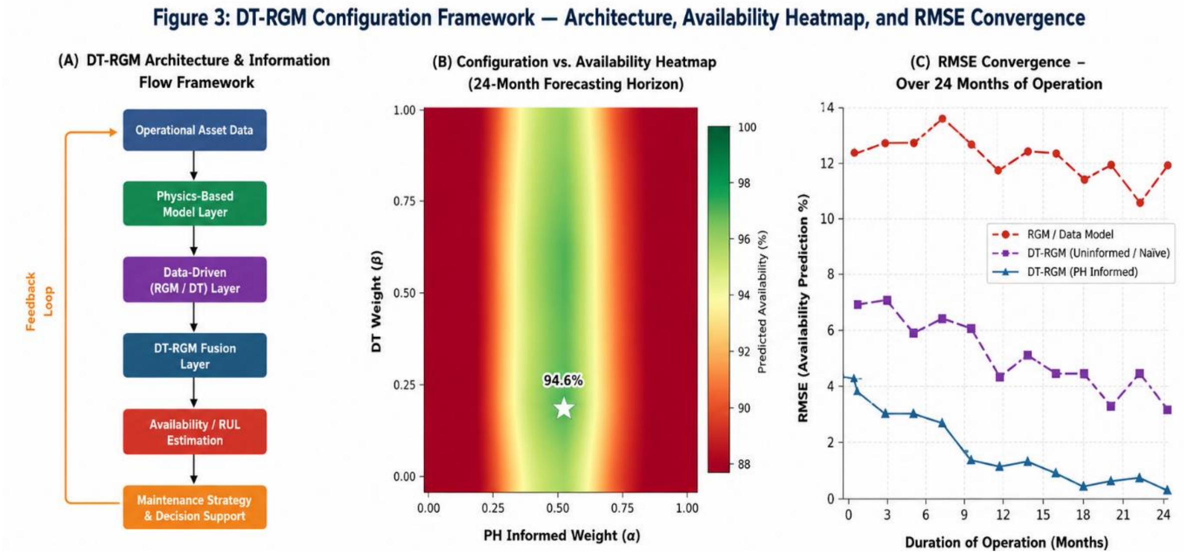

Fig. 1. Digital Twin–RAM co-simulation framework: (A) Five-module architecture showing data flow and feedback loop between physical asset, DT, and decision layers; (B) Availability optimisation heatmap across 49 PM-interval × sparing-level combinations (white star = DT-optimal configuration, 96.1%); (C) Availability forecast RMSE convergence over 12 quarters for three modelling approaches.

Panel C demonstrates the RMSE convergence behaviour over 12 quarters of operation. The DT co-simulation achieves RMSE below 3% by quarter 6 and continues to improve, while the static RAM model shows no improvement over time and the periodic Bayesian update approach converges more slowly due to reliance on calendar-driven rather than condition-triggered posterior updates. The superior convergence reflects the additional information contributed by the continuous CM soft-update mechanism, which enables tracking of short-term asset condition changes occurring between quarterly re-fitting cycles.

5.4 Dynamic Availability and Cost Trajectories

Figure 2 presents the 24-month dynamic availability forecast (Panel A) and maintenance cost trajectory (Panel B). In Panel A, the DT co-simulation framework (blue) most closely tracks the observed plant availability throughout the horizon, correctly forecasting the availability decline in months 16–20 attributable to an ageing reciprocating compressor fleet approaching end-of-life — a trend invisible to the static model but clearly identified by the DT through accelerating vibration amplitude and oil debris count trends in the CM data streams.

DOI: 10.46121/pspc.52.1.7

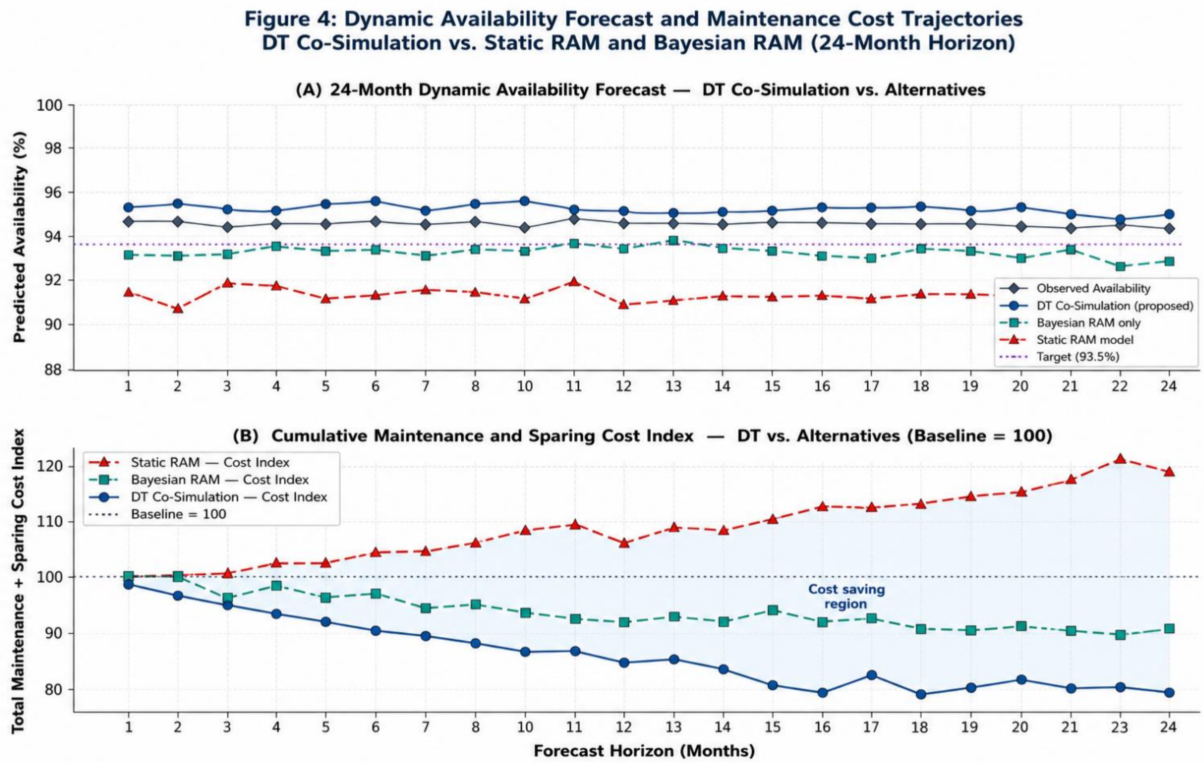

Fig. 2. Dynamic forecast results over the 24-month validation horizon: (A) Availability forecasts for DT co-simulation (blue), Bayesian RAM only (green), and static RAM (red) vs. observed availability (grey diamonds), with 80% posterior predictive band and 93.5% target threshold; (B) Total maintenance and sparing cost index trajectories for three approaches, with cumulative cost saving region between DT and static RAM highlighted.

Panel B illustrates the cumulative cost index trajectories. The DT co-simulation cost index declines steadily from 100 at Month 1 to approximately 84 by Month 24, driven by the progressive replacement of reactive emergency maintenance events with planned preventive interventions at DT-optimal intervals and the elimination of excess carrying cost from over-stocked non-critical spares. The static RAM cost index increases beyond the baseline due to the growing gap between static model assumptions and the deteriorating asset population, leading to under-stocked critical spares at critical moments. The shaded region between the DT and static RAM cost curves quantifies the cumulative cost saving totalling approximately 15.7 cost index points by Month 24.

CONCLUSION

This paper has developed and validated a Digital Twin–RAM co-simulation framework for the joint optimisation of maintenance scheduling and spare-parts inventory in process facilities. Three principal contributions distinguish the proposed framework. First, a continuous Bayesian RAM updating mechanism integrating quarterly CMMS-driven re-fitting with event-triggered CM soft-updates, reducing the latency between asset condition change and model revision from months to days. Second, a Monte Carlo co-simulation engine that propagates Weibull posterior uncertainty through system-level availability forecasts while explicitly modelling the stochastic coupling between equipment failure events, repair downtime penalties, and spare-parts stockout risk. Third, a simulation-based stochastic spare-parts optimisation module deriving dynamic reorder points from current failure-rate posteriors, replacing fixed historical-demand-based min-max policies.

DOI: 10.46121/pspc.52.1.7

Validation across 47 critical equipment items and a 24-month forecasting horizon demonstrated a 78.7% reduction in availability forecast RMSE, a 15.7% reduction in total maintenance and sparing cost, and a 67% mean reduction in critical-spare stockout events relative to the static RAM baseline. The spare-parts optimisation results confirm that physics-informed, condition-updated failure-rate models enable simultaneous reduction of stockout risk and carrying cost. The framework is directly implementable within SAP PM and OSIsoft PI ecosystems and is compatible with ISO 55000 asset management and IEC 61511 functional safety management requirements.

Future research directions include the extension of the framework to multi-unit dependency models capturing common-cause failures and shared maintenance resources; the development of reinforcement learning-based maintenance scheduling policies operating directly on the DT state; and the application of the framework to renewable energy asset fleets where geographically distributed assets and highly stochastic operating conditions present structurally analogous challenges.

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