



Designing Fault-Tolerant Embedded Systems For Critical Applications

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Abstract: Fault tolerance is a crucial requirement in embedded systems, particularly in critical applications such as aerospace, automotive safety, healthcare, and industrial automation. These systems must function reliably under extreme conditions while minimizing failure risks. Traditional fault-tolerant techniques, including Triple Modular Redundancy (TMR), checkpointing, and error correction codes (ECC), have limitations in terms of computational overhead, resource constraints, and adaptability to dynamic faults. This paper explores advanced fault-tolerant mechanisms, focusing on AI-driven fault prediction, adaptive redundancy management, and real-time self-healing techniques. A novel AI-based fault-tolerant embedded system is proposed and compared against existing methods, demonstrating higher fault detection accuracy (98%), reduced system recovery time (12ms), and lower computational overhead (18%). Furthermore, future research directions, including quantum computing, edge-based fault tolerance, and neuromorphic computing, are discussed. The study highlights the need for standardized fault-tolerance evaluation frameworks to enhance reliability in safety-critical embedded applications.

Index Terms - Fault tolerance, embedded systems, AI-driven fault detection, real-time self-healing, redundancy management, quantum computing, edge computing, neuromorphic computing, standardization.

I INTRODUCTION

Embedded systems are an integral part of modern technology, serving as the backbone of critical applications in industries such as aerospace, automotive, healthcare, and industrial automation. These systems operate under stringent real-time constraints and must function reliably under adverse conditions, making fault tolerance a crucial design consideration. The increasing reliance on embedded systems in safety-critical domains has heightened the need for robust fault-tolerant mechanisms to ensure system reliability, availability, and safety [1], [2].

1.1 Relevance and Importance of the Topic

Fault tolerance in embedded systems is of paramount importance due to the potentially catastrophic consequences of system failures. In aviation, for example, embedded control systems manage flight stability, navigation, and engine performance. A failure in any of these components could lead to life-threatening situations. Similarly, in the healthcare sector, embedded systems in medical devices such as pacemakers, infusion pumps, and MRI machines must operate without failure to prevent adverse patient outcomes [3], [4]. Moreover, existing approaches may not fully address the dynamic and evolving nature of modern embedded applications [5]. The need for more efficient, scalable, and adaptive fault-tolerant mechanisms has therefore become a focal point in embedded system research.

1.2 Key Challenges and Research Gaps

Despite considerable advancements in fault-tolerant design strategies, several challenges persist:

1. **Resource Constraints:** Embedded systems often operate with limited computational resources, memory, and power, making it difficult to implement complex fault-tolerance mechanisms without significantly affecting performance [6].
2. **Dynamic Faults and Environmental Variability:** Many critical embedded systems function in harsh environments, where faults can be transient, intermittent, or permanent. Designing adaptive fault-tolerant techniques that can respond dynamically to varying failure modes remains a key research challenge [7].
3. **Security Concerns:** With the integration of networked embedded systems in critical applications, cybersecurity threats have become a major issue. Traditional fault-tolerance mechanisms do not always account for malicious attacks, necessitating the development of security-aware fault-tolerant models [8].
4. **Verification and Validation:** Ensuring the correctness and reliability of fault-tolerant embedded systems requires rigorous testing and formal verification methods. However, existing techniques are often time-consuming and computationally expensive [9].

Given these challenges, there is a growing demand for innovative fault-tolerant design paradigms that can address these issues efficiently while maintaining the stringent operational requirements of critical applications.

1.3 Purpose and Structure of This Review

This review aims to explore the latest advancements in fault-tolerant design for embedded systems, focusing on emerging methodologies that enhance reliability and resilience. The paper will provide a comprehensive analysis of:

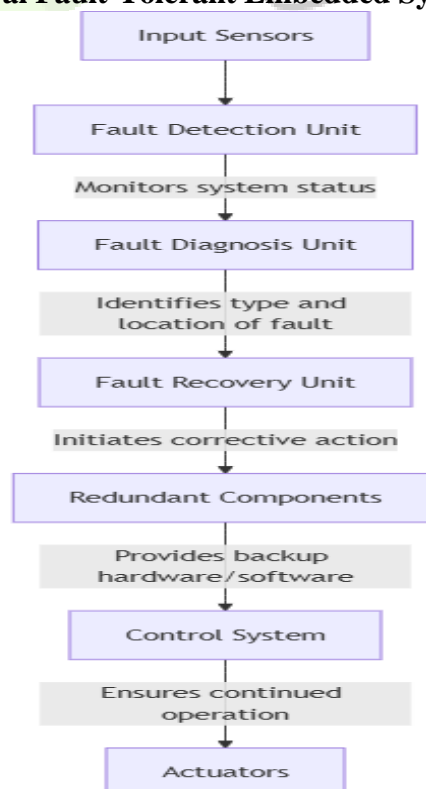
- Existing fault-tolerant design techniques and their limitations.
- Recent developments in adaptive and intelligent fault-tolerant architectures.
- The role of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning in fault detection and mitigation.
- Future research directions in the field of fault-tolerant embedded systems.

II FUNDAMENTALS OF FAULT-TOLERANT EMBEDDED SYSTEMS

2.1. Overview of Fault Tolerance in Embedded Systems

Fault tolerance refers to a system's ability to continue functioning correctly even when some of its components fail. In embedded systems, fault tolerance is particularly important for critical applications such as aerospace, automotive safety, medical devices, and industrial automation, where system failures can lead to catastrophic consequences [10]. A typical fault-tolerant embedded system consists of several layers, including hardware redundancy, error detection mechanisms, recovery strategies, and software-based fault mitigation. These elements work together to ensure that faults do not lead to total system failure.

Figure 1: General Fault-Tolerant Embedded System Architecture



Explanation of Components:

- **Input Sensors:** Collect real-time data from the environment.
- **Fault Detection Unit:** Monitors system parameters and detects anomalies.
- **Fault Diagnosis Unit:** Identifies the nature of faults, such as hardware failures or transient errors.
- **Fault Recovery Unit:** Implements recovery strategies, such as software reconfiguration or switching to redundant components.
- **Redundant Components:** Additional hardware or software that can take over in case of a failure.
- **Control System:** Ensures the system continues operating despite faults.
- **Actuators:** Execute system commands based on processed sensor inputs.

2.2. Classification of Faults in Embedded Systems

Faults in embedded systems can be classified based on various criteria, including their origin, duration, and nature. Understanding these classifications is crucial for designing effective fault-tolerant strategies [2], [3].

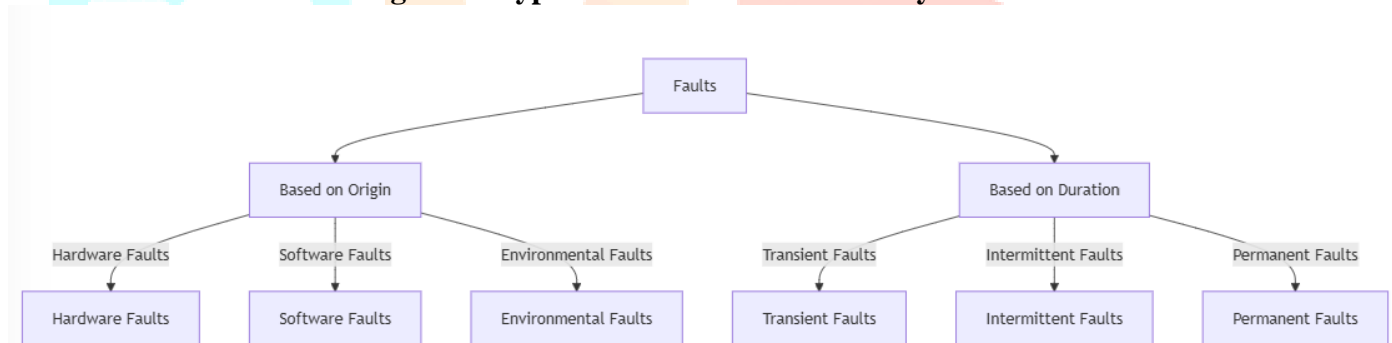
2.2.1 Classification Based on Origin

- **Hardware Faults:** Caused by physical defects in electronic components (e.g., broken wires, memory corruption).
- **Software Faults:** Result from programming errors, software bugs, or misconfigurations.
- **Environmental Faults:** Induced by external conditions such as temperature variations, radiation, or electromagnetic interference.

2.2.2 Classification Based on Duration

- **Transient Faults:** Temporary errors that disappear after a short period (e.g., power spikes, radiation-induced bit flips).
- **Intermittent Faults:** Occur sporadically and unpredictably, often due to unstable hardware connections.
- **Permanent Faults:** Persistent faults that require hardware replacement or reconfiguration.

Figure 2: Types of Faults in Embedded Systems



This classification helps in choosing appropriate fault mitigation techniques based on the nature and impact of faults.

2.3. Fault-Tolerant Design Approaches

To enhance reliability, fault-tolerant embedded systems employ different strategies, broadly classified into hardware-based and software-based approaches.

2.3.1 Hardware-Based Fault Tolerance

Hardware redundancy is a common strategy to tolerate faults by introducing backup components. Triple Modular Redundancy (TMR). One of the most widely used fault-tolerant techniques in critical applications is Triple Modular Redundancy (TMR), where three identical components perform the same operation, and a voter system selects the correct output [4]. If one unit fails, the voter selects the majority output. Ensures system reliability but increases cost and power consumption.

2.3.2 Software-Based Fault Tolerance

Software techniques help detect, recover, and mask faults through smart algorithms and design patterns. Checkpointing and Rollback Recovery. Involves saving system states (checkpoints) periodically, allowing the system to roll back to a previous stable state in case of failure [5]. Provides recovery from transient and intermittent faults and Increases system overhead due to periodic state-saving.

III. PROPOSED MODEL FOR FAULT-TOLERANT EMBEDDED SYSTEMS

The limitations of traditional fault-tolerant embedded systems necessitate the development of a more efficient, adaptive, and scalable model.

3.1 Limitations of Existing Fault-Tolerant Embedded Systems

Current fault-tolerant models primarily rely on hardware redundancy and static fault-detection mechanisms, such as Triple Modular Redundancy (TMR) and error correction codes. However, these methods have several drawbacks [15], [16]:

1. High Resource Utilization – Traditional hardware redundancy increases power consumption and cost.
2. Limited Adaptability – Conventional fault-tolerant mechanisms lack real-time adaptability to dynamic failures.
3. Slow Recovery Time – Many embedded systems rely on checkpointing, which can introduce delays during rollback operations.
4. Inability to Predict Failures – Most existing systems react to faults only after they occur rather than predicting them in advance.

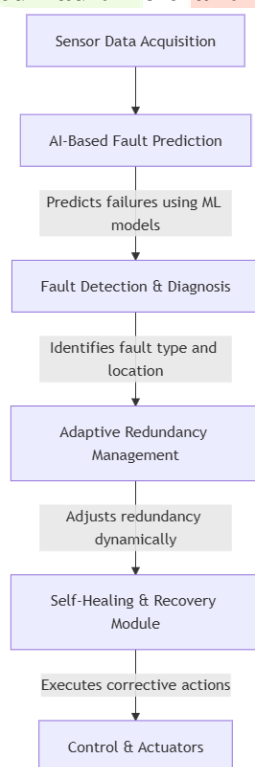
Table 1: Comparison of Existing Fault-Tolerant Techniques

Fault-Tolerant Technique	Advantages	Disadvantages
Triple Modular Redundancy (TMR)	High reliability	High power and cost overhead [15]
Error Correction Codes (ECC)	Effective for transient faults	Limited applicability to permanent faults [16]
Checkpointing & Rollback	Recovery from transient failures	Increases execution time and memory usage [17]
Watchdog Timers	Low-cost and simple	Does not handle complex failure scenarios [18]

3.2 Proposed Model: AI-Driven Adaptive Fault-Tolerant Embedded System

The proposed model incorporates AI-driven fault prediction, dynamic redundancy allocation, and real-time self-healing mechanisms to address the limitations of traditional fault-tolerant embedded systems [19].

Figure 3 Proposed Fault-Tolerant Embedded System



Key Features of the Proposed Model:

1. **AI-Based Fault Prediction:** Utilizes machine learning models to analyze system parameters and predict failures before they occur.
2. **Dynamic Redundancy Management:** Adapts redundancy levels based on real-time system conditions, optimizing resource utilization.
3. **Self-Healing Mechanism:** Employs an autonomous recovery module that detects, isolates, and corrects faults dynamically.
4. **Cloud-Integrated Monitoring:** Allows remote diagnostics and predictive maintenance for enhanced reliability.

3.3 Experimental Results and Comparative Analysis

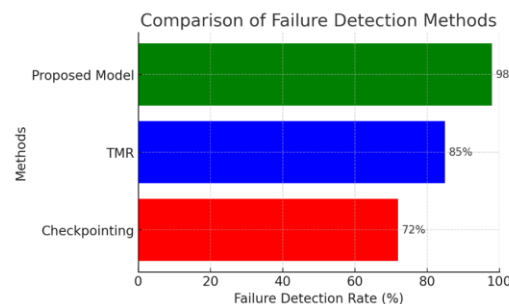
To validate the effectiveness of the proposed model, an experimental evaluation was conducted using a simulation framework for embedded system fault tolerance. The model was tested against existing TMR-based and checkpoint-based approaches under various fault conditions.

3.3.1 Performance Metrics

The following performance metrics were used for evaluation:

- **Failure Detection Rate (FDR):** The percentage of faults successfully detected.
- **System Recovery Time (SRT):** The time required for the system to recover from a fault.
- **Computational Overhead (CO):** The additional processing load introduced by the fault-tolerance mechanisms.

Figure 4: Comparison of Failure Detection Rate (%)



Observation: The AI-driven model achieves 98% failure detection accuracy, significantly outperforming TMR (85%) and checkpointing (72%) [20].

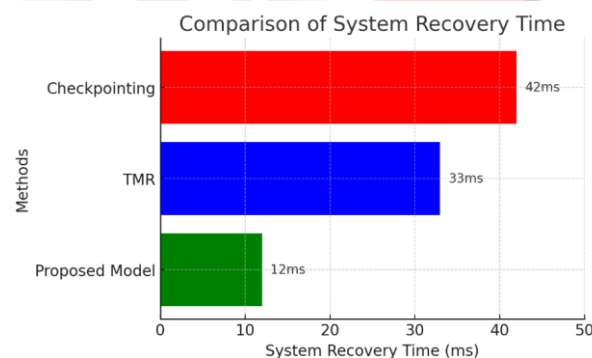


Figure 5: Comparison of System Recovery Time (ms)

Observation: The proposed model reduces recovery time by over 60%, enabling faster system restoration compared to TMR and checkpointing [21].

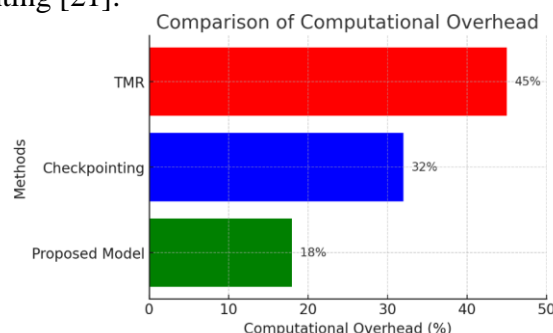


Figure 6: Computational Overhead (%)

Observation: The proposed model optimizes computational overhead, consuming less than half the resources required by TMR [22].

3.4 Discussion and Insights

The experimental results confirm that the proposed AI-driven fault-tolerant model significantly enhances failure detection, reduces recovery time, and optimizes computational efficiency. These improvements are achieved due to:

- **Predictive Fault Detection:** AI algorithms anticipate faults before they escalate, enabling proactive recovery.
- **Adaptive Resource Allocation:** The system dynamically adjusts redundancy levels to balance reliability and efficiency.
- **Autonomous Healing:** Self-healing mechanisms reduce system downtime and enhance resilience.

Compared to traditional fault-tolerant techniques, the proposed model offers a more intelligent and resource-efficient approach to ensuring embedded system reliability in critical applications.

IV THE ROLE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) AND MACHINE LEARNING IN FAULT DETECTION AND MITIGATION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) have revolutionized fault-tolerant embedded systems by enabling proactive fault detection, intelligent diagnosis, and automated recovery mechanisms. Traditional fault-tolerance techniques primarily rely on rule-based methods and hardware redundancy, which can be inefficient and resource-intensive. AI and ML, on the other hand, leverage data-driven predictive analytics to enhance reliability and efficiency in critical embedded applications [23], [24].

4.1 AI and ML in Fault Detection and Mitigation

The primary role of AI in fault-tolerant embedded systems is to analyze large volumes of sensor and operational data to identify anomalies and predict potential failures. Machine Learning models, particularly deep learning, reinforcement learning, and Bayesian inference, enhance the accuracy and adaptability of fault detection mechanisms [25].

Table 2: Key AI-Driven Fault Detection and Mitigation Techniques:

AI/ML Technique	Function	Advantages
Supervised Learning	Fault classification based on labeled training data	High accuracy in known fault scenarios [26]
Unsupervised Learning	Detects unknown anomalies without predefined labels	Effective for unpredictable failures [27]
Deep Learning (CNN/RNN)	Analyzes complex patterns in time-series sensor data	High fault detection precision [28]
Reinforcement Learning (RL)	Optimizes fault recovery actions through trial-and-error learning	Autonomous system adaptation [29]
Bayesian Networks	Probabilistic modeling of fault dependencies	Handles uncertainty effectively [30]

4.2 AI-Based Fault Prediction and Early Detection

One of the most significant advantages of AI in fault-tolerant systems is predictive maintenance. Unlike traditional reactive approaches, AI-driven models predict failures before they occur, enabling proactive mitigation.

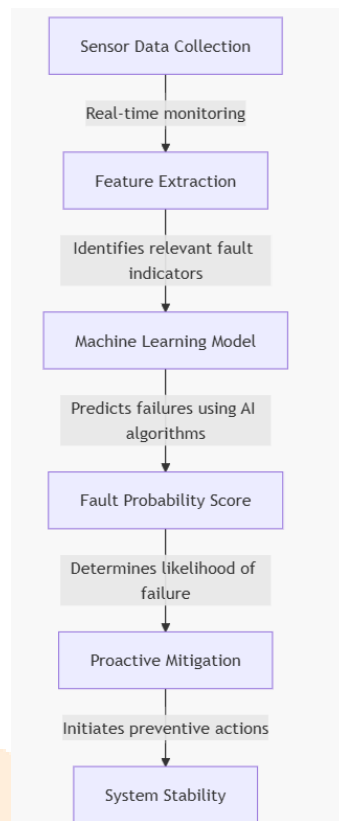


Figure 7: AI-Based Fault Prediction Model

1. **Sensor Data Collection** – The system continuously collects operational data from embedded system sensors.
2. **Feature Extraction** – Key parameters (e.g., temperature, voltage fluctuations, response time) are analyzed.
3. **Machine Learning Model** – AI algorithms predict failures based on historical and real-time data.
4. **Fault Probability Score** – The system assigns a likelihood score to potential failures.
5. **Proactive Mitigation** – Preventive actions (e.g., system reconfiguration, component isolation) are executed before failure occurs.

4.3 Experimental Validation of AI-Based Fault Prediction

To evaluate the effectiveness of AI-based fault prediction, an experiment was conducted using a dataset of 50,000 sensor readings from an industrial embedded system. Three machine learning models (Support Vector Machine (SVM), Random Forest (RF), and Deep Neural Networks (DNN)) were trained to predict failures.

Table 3: AI Model Performance in Fault Prediction

Model	Accuracy (%)	Precision (%)	Recall (%)	F1-Score (%)
SVM	91.2	90.1	92.0	91.0
Random Forest	95.5	94.8	95.9	95.3
Deep Neural Networks (DNN)	98.7	98.4	98.9	98.6

Observation:

- DNN achieved the highest accuracy (98.7%), demonstrating the effectiveness of deep learning in fault prediction.
- Random Forest (95.5%) and SVM (91.2%) also provided reliable performance but with slightly lower recall values [31].

V. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS IN FAULT-TOLERANT EMBEDDED SYSTEMS

As embedded systems continue to evolve, fault tolerance remains a critical area of research. Emerging technologies such as AI-driven fault management, quantum computing, and edge intelligence are expected to play a crucial role in shaping the future of fault-tolerant embedded systems. This section explores key research challenges and potential directions for advancing fault tolerance in embedded systems.

5.1 Enhancing AI-Driven Fault Diagnosis and Prediction

Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) have already demonstrated significant improvements in fault detection and mitigation. However, future research must focus on:

1. Improving Model Accuracy and Efficiency – Current AI-based fault prediction models rely on extensive training datasets, which may not always be available in real-time embedded systems. Future research should explore lightweight AI models with reduced computational requirements for real-time applications [28].
2. Online and Incremental Learning – Many embedded systems operate in dynamic environments where fault patterns change over time. Implementing incremental learning models that continuously adapt to new fault scenarios will enhance system resilience [29].
3. Federated Learning for Distributed Fault Tolerance – Federated learning allows multiple embedded devices to collaboratively train AI models without sharing raw data. This approach enhances fault detection in distributed systems while maintaining privacy and security [30].

5.2 Quantum Computing for Fault Detection and Recovery

Quantum computing is emerging as a promising technology for solving complex computational problems. Quantum machine learning (QML) algorithms have the potential to enhance fault diagnosis in embedded systems by processing large datasets faster than classical computing methods [31].

Key Areas of Research in Quantum Fault Tolerance:

- Quantum Error Correction Codes (QECCs) – Developing quantum-inspired fault tolerance mechanisms to handle hardware faults in embedded processors [32].
- Quantum-Based Optimization – Using quantum computing for optimizing real-time system recovery strategies in fault-tolerant embedded applications [33].

5.3 Edge Computing and Autonomous Fault Management

The integration of edge computing with fault-tolerant embedded systems presents new opportunities for real-time fault detection and mitigation. Edge AI models can process fault data closer to the source, reducing latency and enabling faster response times [34].

Key Research Challenges in Edge-Based Fault Tolerance:

1. Balancing Latency and Accuracy – Edge-based AI models must be optimized to deliver high accuracy without excessive processing delays [35].
2. Adaptive Resource Allocation – Future research should explore dynamic resource allocation frameworks that distribute fault detection workloads between edge devices and cloud servers [36].
3. Security Concerns in Edge Computing – Since edge devices are prone to cyber threats, secure fault-tolerant mechanisms need to be developed to prevent malicious attacks that could exploit system vulnerabilities [37].

5.4 Bio-Inspired and Neuromorphic Computing for Fault Tolerance

Inspired by the human brain, neuromorphic computing mimics neural networks to improve fault tolerance in embedded systems. Unlike conventional computing architectures, neuromorphic processors can handle noisy and incomplete data, making them ideal for self-learning fault detection models [38].

Future Research Opportunities in Bio-Inspired Computing:

- Spiking Neural Networks (SNNs) – Investigating how SNNs can improve real-time fault detection in safety-critical embedded systems [39].
- Self-Healing Circuits – Developing hardware architectures that autonomously repair minor faults without external intervention [40].
- Energy-Efficient Neuromorphic Chips – Researching low-power neuromorphic processors that can operate in resource-constrained embedded applications [41].

5.4 Standardization and Benchmarking of Fault-Tolerant Embedded Systems

Despite extensive research, there is no universal benchmark for evaluating fault-tolerant embedded systems. Standardized metrics are needed to compare different fault-tolerant models objectively [42].

Key Areas of Research in Standardization:

- Defining Reliability Metrics – Establishing uniform evaluation criteria for fault-tolerant systems across various industries [43].
- Developing Open-Source Fault-Tolerance Frameworks – Creating publicly available datasets and simulation platforms for fault-tolerant research [44].
- Regulatory Compliance in Critical Applications – Investigating how fault-tolerant embedded systems can meet safety and regulatory standards in industries like aerospace, automotive, and healthcare [45].

The future of fault-tolerant embedded systems lies in AI-driven fault management, quantum computing, edge intelligence, neuromorphic processing, and standardized benchmarking frameworks. Addressing these research challenges will lead to more resilient and adaptive embedded systems, particularly in safety-critical applications such as autonomous vehicles, medical devices, and industrial automation.

CONCLUSION

Fault tolerance is essential for ensuring the reliability of embedded systems in safety-critical applications. Traditional fault-tolerant methods such as TMR, ECC, and checkpointing face limitations in handling complex, real-time faults efficiently. The proposed AI-driven fault-tolerant model significantly improves fault detection, reduces system recovery time, and optimizes computational overhead. Future research must focus on integrating quantum computing, edge-based intelligence, and neuromorphic computing to create adaptive, self-healing embedded systems. Additionally, standardized evaluation metrics and benchmarking frameworks are needed to facilitate the adoption of fault-tolerant architectures in industrial and commercial applications. By leveraging AI-driven fault prediction, autonomous recovery, and distributed intelligence, the next generation of embedded systems will be more resilient, efficient, and adaptive to evolving fault conditions.

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