Application of Direct Torque Control in Robotic Actuation Systems: Performance Analysis and Industrial Relevance-A Review

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Abstract: *Direct Torque Control (DTC) has emerged as a powerful motor control technique due to its fast dynamic response, simple control structure, and robustness against parameter variations. In the robotics industry, precise torque and speed control are critical for achieving high accuracy and efficiency. This paper investigates the application of Direct Torque Control in robotic actuation systems. A detailed theoretical analysis of DTC is presented along with its implementation in robotic joints. Performance parameters such as torque ripple, speed response, and disturbance rejection are analyzed and compared with conventional Field Oriented Control (FOC). Simulation results demonstrate that DTC provides superior dynamic performance, making it suitable for modern robotic applications.*

Keywords: *Direct Torque Control, Robotics, Electric Drives, PMSM, Industrial Automation.*

1. Introduction

The robotics industry is advancing rapidly across multiple sectors, including manufacturing, healthcare, logistics, and service automation. Robotics systems depend heavily on precise motion and torque control to perform tasks accurately and efficiently. Traditional control methods such as Field Oriented Control (FOC) have been widely used. However, they often require complex transformations and suffer limitations in dynamic environments. Direct Torque Control (DTC) was first introduced in the 1980s as an alternative technique, offering direct regulation of torque and stator flux without the need for explicit current control loops. The ability to achieve fast torque responses, minimal computational requirements, and reduced dependence on motor parameters has made DTC a viable candidate for modern robotic applications. This review aims to analyze the evolution, operational principles, advancements, and industrial relevance of DTC in the context of robotics.

2. Background and Fundamentals of Direct Torque Control

DTC is a sensor-based control strategy that directly manipulates motor torque and flux using optimized inverter switching patterns. Unlike FOC, which relies on rotating reference frames and complex transformations, DTC uses stator flux and torque estimators alongside hysteresis comparators to determine the appropriate voltage vectors from a switching table.

2.1 Principle of Operation

The core concept in DTC is to maintain torque (T) and flux (Φ) within prescribed hysteresis bands by selecting suitable voltage vectors generated by a voltage source inverter (VSI). This leads to:-

- Faster torque response
- Reduced computational complexity
- Lower dependency on exact motor parameter values

The estimated stator flux linkage (Ψ_s) and electromagnetic torque (T_e) are obtained from measured stator currents (i_s) and terminal voltages (v_s):-

$$\Psi_s = \int (v_s - R_s \cdot i_s)dt$$

$$T_e = \frac{3}{2}P(\Psi_s \times i_s)$$

Where R_s is stator resistance and P is the number of poles.

2.2 Comparison with Field Oriented Control

S.No	FEATURE	DTC	FOC
1.	Control Philosophy	Torque & flux direct control	Current control loops
2.	Computational Load	Lower	Higher
3.	Torque Response	Faster	Moderate
4.	Complexity	Simple	Complex
5.	Implementation	Hysteresis & Switching Tables	Transformations , PWM generation

This **simplified structure makes DTC attractive for robotic** applications where real-time responsiveness is vital. Direct Torque Control (DTC) has gained significant attention in robotic drive systems due to its inherently simplified control structure. Unlike conventional vector control techniques such as Field-Oriented Control (FOC), DTC directly regulates electromagnetic torque and stator flux without employing complex coordinate transformations, current regulators, or pulse-width modulation (PWM) schemes. This structural simplicity makes DTC particularly suitable for high-performance robotic applications requiring fast and accurate torque control.

The elimination of inner current control loops and proportional–integral (PI) controllers significantly reduces system complexity. In DTC, stator flux and torque are estimated using measured stator voltages and currents, and their errors are processed through hysteresis comparators. Based on these errors and the stator flux sector, an appropriate voltage vector is selected from a predefined switching table. As a result, the control algorithm becomes straightforward and computationally efficient.

This simplified architecture leads to a reduced computational burden, enabling implementation on low-cost digital signal processors (DSPs) or microcontrollers commonly used in robotic systems. Such reduction in hardware and software complexity is advantageous for mobile robots, collaborative robots, and humanoid robots, where compactness, energy efficiency, and cost-effectiveness are critical design considerations.

Furthermore, the absence of PWM modulation and current regulation loops allows DTC to achieve a very fast dynamic torque response. This characteristic is highly desirable in robotic applications involving rapid acceleration, deceleration, and frequent load variations, such as pick-and-place operations, robotic manipulators,

and autonomous systems. The direct control of torque ensures minimal delay between reference commands and motor response, thereby improving motion precision and stability.

Another important advantage of the simplified DTC structure is its robustness against parameter variations. Since DTC does not rely heavily on motor parameters such as rotor resistance, it maintains stable performance under changing thermal and load conditions, which are common in robotic environments. This robustness enhances system reliability and reduces the need for frequent recalibration.

In addition, the direct torque-based control approach of DTC aligns well with modern robotic control architectures, where higher-level controllers generate torque or speed references. This compatibility facilitates seamless integration of DTC-based motor drives into hierarchical robotic control frameworks.

In summary, the simplified control structure of Direct Torque Control offers reduced computational complexity, fast dynamic response, and enhanced robustness, making it an attractive solution for advanced robotic motion control systems.

2.3 Microcontroller Selection for DTC-Based Robotic Drive Systems

The implementation of Direct Torque Control (DTC) in robotic drive systems imposes strict requirements on the embedded controller in terms of computational speed, real-time performance, and peripheral support. Since DTC directly controls electromagnetic torque and stator flux through fast switching decisions, the choice of microcontroller plays a critical role in achieving high dynamic performance and stable robotic motion.

DTC algorithms require high-speed acquisition of stator currents and voltages, real-time estimation of torque and flux, hysteresis-based decision logic, and rapid inverter switching. Consequently, microcontrollers used in DTC-based robotic drives must support fast analog-to-digital converters (ADCs), low-latency interrupt handling, and deterministic execution.

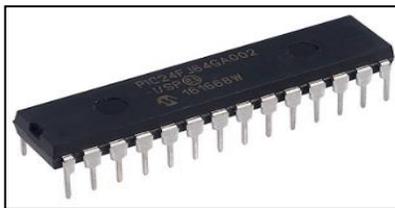### 2.3.1) 8-bit Microcontrollers in DTC-Based Robotics

8-bit microcontrollers are generally unsuitable for full-scale DTC implementation due to limited computational capability and low ADC sampling rates. However, they may be used in auxiliary robotic tasks such as supervisory control, basic speed regulation, or low-power educational robots where simplified DTC variants or lookup-based torque control are employed. Due to their limited processing resources, 8-bit controllers cannot

efficiently handle real-time flux and torque estimation required in high-performance robotic joints.

2.3.2) 16-bit Microcontrollers and Digital Signal Controllers for DTC

16-bit microcontrollers, particularly Digital Signal Controllers (DSCs), are widely used in DTC-based robotic drive applications. Devices such as the Microchip dsPIC33 and Texas Instruments C2000 series offer specialized motor control peripherals, including high-resolution PWM modules, fast ADCs, and hardware multipliers. These controllers enable real-time execution of stator flux estimation and hysteresis control loops with minimal delay. As a result, they are suitable for robotic manipulators, mobile robots, and servo drives requiring fast torque response and moderate computational complexity.

2.3.3) 32-bit Microcontrollers for Advanced DTC Implementation

32-bit microcontrollers based on ARM Cortex-M architectures are increasingly adopted in DTC-based robotic systems. Their high clock speeds, floating-point units (FPUs), and large memory capacity allow precise implementation of DTC algorithms, including space vector modulation–based DTC (DTC-SVM) and sensor-less DTC techniques.

In robotic applications requiring smooth torque control, reduced ripple, and high positional accuracy, 32-bit microcontrollers provide sufficient computational headroom to execute both low-level DTC algorithms and higher-level motion control tasks concurrently.
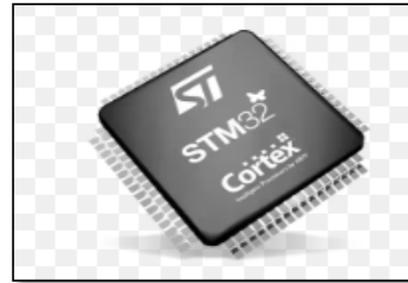
2.3.4) SoC-Based Controllers in Hierarchical DTC Robotics

In complex robotic systems, System-on-Chip (SoC) controllers are often used in conjunction with dedicated motor control microcontrollers. While SoCs handle high-level functions such as trajectory planning, vision processing, and artificial intelligence, the DTC algorithm is executed on a real-time microcontroller or DSC at the joint level.

This hierarchical control structure ensures that the fast dynamic requirements of DTC are met without compromising higher-level robotic intelligence. The simplified structure of DTC reduces the need for complex current regulators and PWM computation, making it well-suited for real-time execution on embedded controllers. However, the high switching frequency and fast torque dynamics inherent to DTC necessitate microcontrollers with deterministic timing and fast peripheral access.
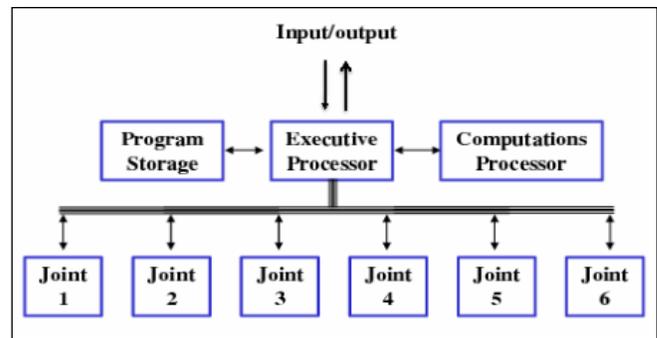
Therefore, 16-bit DSCs and 32-bit microcontrollers emerge as the most suitable platforms for DTC-based robotic

drives, offering an optimal balance between performance, cost, and implementation complexity.

Summary Table: Microcontroller Suitability for DTC-Based Robotic Drives.

S. No	Controller Type	DTC Suitability	Typical Robotic Application
1.	8-Bit MCU	Low	Educational robots
2.	16-Bit MCU	Medium	Mobile robots servo drives
3.	DSC	High	Manipulators, Robotic joints
4.	32 bit MCU	Very High	Industrial and Collaborative robots
5.	SOC	Indirect	High Level robotic Control

2. Standard Block Diagram of a DTC Robotic Drive

A typical DTC robotic drive architecture consists of the following main blocks:

1. Core Blocks (Mandatory)
2. Reference Torque / Speed Generator
3. DTC Controller (Microcontroller / DSC)
4. Voltage Source Inverter (VSI)
5. AC Motor (IM / PMSM)
6. Sensors (Current & Voltage)
7. Robotic Load (Joint / Actuator)

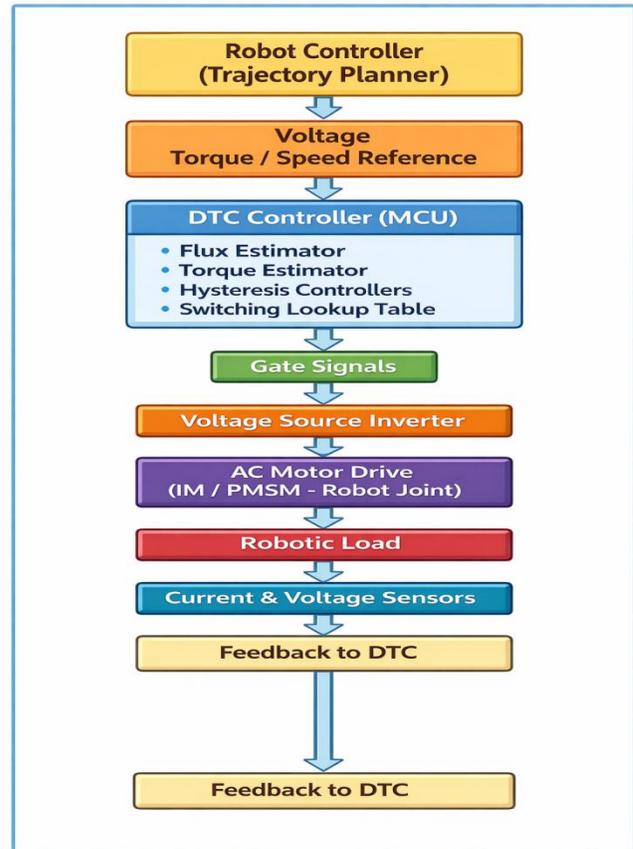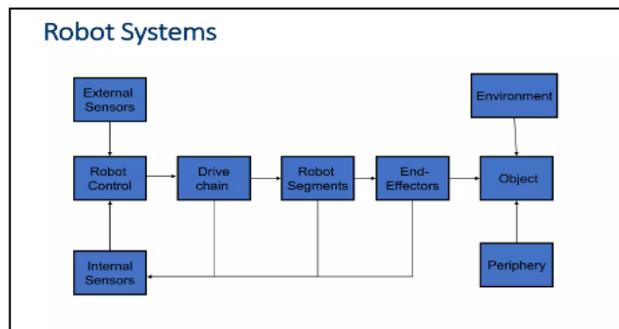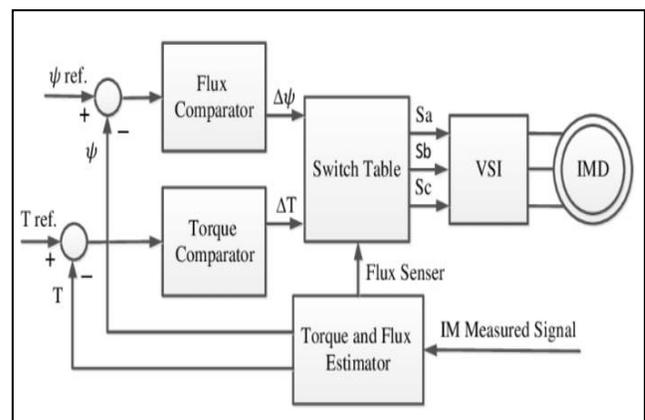**2.3.5) Typical DTC Robotic Drive Block Diagram (Conceptual Layout):-**

Fig:- Block diagram of DTC Robotic Drive Block Diagram

3. Direct Torque Control in Robotic Actuation

Robotic manipulators and mobile robots require high precision in torque and position control, particularly during dynamic motion or under variable loads. DTC is well suited to meet these requirements. Direct Torque Control (DTC) is

an advanced motor control strategy widely employed in robotic actuation systems to achieve fast and precise control of electromagnetic torque and stator flux. Unlike conventional vector control techniques, DTC directly regulates torque and flux by selecting optimal inverter switching states, eliminating the need for current control loops and pulse-width modulation (PWM). This direct control approach makes DTC particularly attractive for robotic applications requiring high dynamic performance and accurate torque regulation.
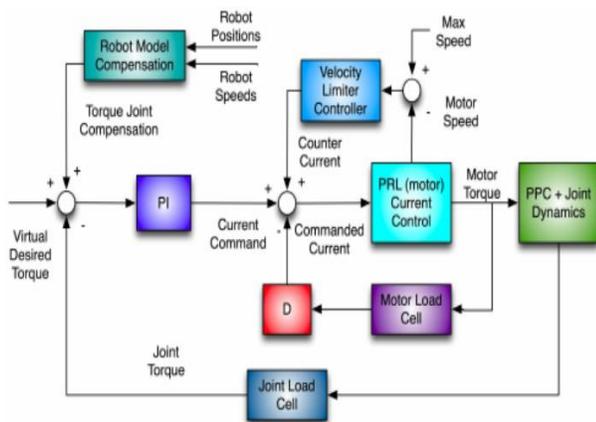
In robotic actuation, motors serve as the primary source of motion for joints, manipulators, and end-effectors. These applications demand rapid torque response, smooth motion, and robustness against load disturbances. DTC fulfills these requirements by estimating stator flux and electromagnetic torque in real time using measured stator voltages and currents. The estimated values are compared with their reference commands through hysteresis controllers, and appropriate voltage vectors are applied to the motor via a voltage source inverter (VSI).

One of the key advantages of DTC in robotic actuation is its fast transient response. Since torque is controlled directly without intermediate current regulation, DTC can produce near-instantaneous torque changes. This capability is essential in robotic tasks such as pick-and-place operations, force-controlled manipulation, collision avoidance, and compliant motion control.

Furthermore, the simplified control structure of DTC reduces computational complexity, enabling efficient implementation on digital signal controllers and 32-bit microcontrollers commonly used in robotic drives. This simplicity enhances system reliability and allows DTC to be integrated seamlessly into hierarchical robotic control architectures, where high-level controllers generate torque or speed references.

Despite its advantages, conventional DTC may introduce torque and flux ripples due to hysteresis-based switching. However, advanced DTC variants, such as space vector modulation–based DTC (DTC-SVM) and predictive DTC, have been developed to mitigate these issues, making DTC increasingly suitable for high-precision robotic actuation.

3.1 Robotic Manipulators

Robotic manipulators, Direct Torque Control (DTC) significantly enhance joint-level actuation performance by providing fast and accurate torque regulation. The direct control of electromagnetic torque enables rapid joint torque response, which is essential for achieving high-speed and precise motion in multi-degree-of-freedom robotic arms. Improved torque responsiveness directly contributes to enhanced path-following accuracy, particularly during dynamic trajectory tracking.

Moreover, DTC improves the ability of robotic manipulators to handle disturbances arising from external force interactions, such as payload variations, contact with the environment, or unexpected load changes. The fast dynamic characteristics of DTC allow the actuator to compensate for such disturbances in real time, thereby maintaining stable and reliable operation. For instance, during high-speed pick-and-place operations, the rapid execution of torque commands enabled by DTC minimizes tracking and positioning errors, resulting in improved operational efficiency and accuracy of the robotic manipulator.

In industrial robot arms, DTC enhances:
- Joint torque response
- Path following precision
- Disturbance handling (external force interaction)

For example, when a manipulator performs high-speed pick-and-place tasks, DTC ensures that torque commands are executed quickly, minimizing positional errors.

3.2 Autonomous Mobile Robots (AMRs)

Mobile robotic platforms commonly employ induction motors or permanent magnet synchronous motors (PMSMs) for wheel actuation due to their high efficiency, reliability, and torque density. In such systems, Direct Torque Control (DTC) provides effective real-time regulation of wheel torque, enabling precise speed control and smooth vehicle motion.

Autonomous Mobile Robot

The fast dynamic response of DTC allows mobile robots to rapidly adapt to changes in terrain conditions, load variations, and external disturbances. Direct control of electromagnetic torque improves traction control and enhances motion stability, which is particularly important for autonomous navigation, obstacle avoidance, and path-following tasks.

Furthermore, the simplified control structure of DTC facilitates efficient implementation on embedded controllers used in mobile robotic platforms. This makes DTC suitable for battery-powered robots, where computational efficiency and energy optimization are critical considerations.

Mobile robotic platforms require drive systems that provide high torque density, fast dynamic response, efficiency, and robustness under varying operating conditions. Both Induction Motors (IMs) and Permanent Magnet Synchronous Motors (PMSMs) are widely used for wheel actuation, and Direct Torque Control (DTC) has been successfully applied to both motor types. However, their performance characteristics under DTC differ in several aspects.

A. Induction Motor–Based DTC

Induction motors are preferred in mobile robotic platforms due to their rugged construction, low cost, and absence of permanent magnets. Under DTC, IMs offer fast torque response and good robustness against parameter variations, making them suitable for outdoor and industrial mobile robots operating in harsh environments.

However, DTC implementation for IMs requires accurate estimation of stator flux and electromagnetic torque, which can be affected by stator resistance variations at low speeds. This may degrade torque accuracy during low-speed navigation or precise manoeuvring tasks. Despite this limitation, IM-based DTC systems remain attractive for applications where cost and durability are primary concerns.

B. PMSM-Based DTC

Permanent Magnet Synchronous Motors provide higher efficiency, higher torque density, and better low-speed performance compared to induction motors. When controlled using DTC, PMSMs exhibit reduced torque ripple and improved torque linearity, which are beneficial for smooth motion and precise speed control in mobile robots. The presence of permanent magnets eliminates rotor copper losses, improving energy efficiency—an important factor for battery-powered mobile platforms. However, PMSMs are more expensive and may be susceptible to demagnetization under high-temperature or overload conditions, requiring careful thermal management.

Mobile platforms often use induction or permanent magnet synchronous motors (PMSM) for wheel actuation. DTC improves:

Adaptive Control: These strategies incorporate real-time adaptive mechanisms, using onboard sensors to monitor conditions and adjust control parameters dynamically. This allows the control system to adapt to varying road conditions (e.g., changing friction coefficients) and vehicle parameters, improving overall robustness and flexibility.

3.3 Collaborative Robots (Cobots)

➢ Cobots operate alongside humans and demand:
- Smooth torque transitions
- Safe interaction dynamics
- Fast reaction to unplanned forces

DTC's rapid torque handling contributes to safer and more responsive cobot behaviour.

Collaborative robots, or "cobots," are gaining popularity in the workplace and education. At first glance, they might look like any other robotic arm or tool. However, they have a unique advantage that other robots don't: cobots are designed to work safely alongside people.

Studies show robots are directly responsible for at least 30 workplace accidents annually. Mental health side effects caused by competition between robots and humans can lead indirectly to more workplace stress, anxiety, errors and physical injuries. Traditional industrial robots can also be complex to operate, further increasing employee stress.

In contrast, collaborative robots are designed from a human-first viewpoint. Safety and accessibility are the top priorities. Cobots tend to be more user-friendly and much less dangerous to work with. As a result, they're ideal for training the next generation of robotics technicians and engineers.

3.4. Performance Aspects and Improvements

Despite its advantages, DTC inherently suffers from torque ripple due to switching delays and discrete voltage vector selection. Several enhancements have been studied:

4. Space-Vector Modulated DTC (DTC-SVM)

Space-Vector Modulated Direct Torque Control (DTC-SVM) is an advanced variant of conventional Direct Torque Control designed to overcome the limitations of torque and flux ripples inherent in hysteresis-based DTC. By replacing the hysteresis controllers and switching table with a space-vector modulation (SVM) technique, DTC-SVM enables smoother torque control and fixed switching frequency, which are highly desirable in robotic applications.

In robotic systems, particularly manipulators and mobile platforms, smooth torque generation and precise motion control are essential to ensure accurate trajectory tracking and stable interaction with the environment. DTC-SVM achieves this by computing a reference voltage vector based on torque and flux errors and synthesizing it using space-vector modulation. This approach allows continuous control of the inverter output voltage, resulting in reduced torque ripple and improved steady-state performance.
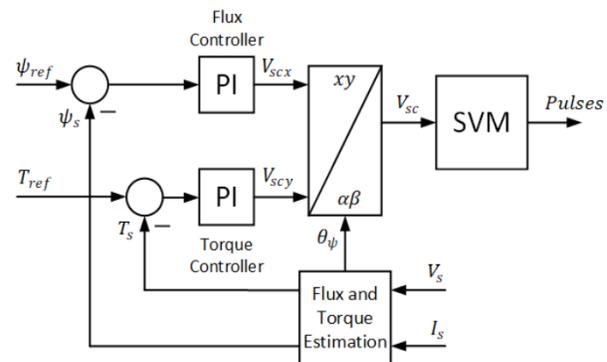

Fig:-Control scheme of the implemented direct torque controller using space vector modulation

The fixed switching frequency characteristic of DTC-SVM simplifies inverter design and reduces acoustic noise and mechanical vibration, which are critical factors in collaborative robots and service robots operating in close proximity to humans. Furthermore, the improved torque smoothness enhances low-speed performance, making DTC-SVM suitable for precise robotic tasks such as force control, compliant manipulation, and slow-speed navigation.

From an implementation perspective, DTC-SVM requires higher computational capability compared to conventional DTC due to the real-time calculation of voltage vectors and modulation signals. However, modern digital signal controllers and 32-bit microcontrollers commonly used in robotic drives can efficiently support DTC-SVM algorithms. The improved control quality achieved through DTC-SVM justifies the additional computational effort in high-performance robotic applications.

The enhanced suitability of Space-Vector Modulated Direct Torque Control (DTC-SVM) for precision robotic actuation arises from its ability to significantly reduce torque and flux ripples while maintaining fast dynamic response. By employing space-vector modulation to generate a continuous reference voltage vector, DTC-SVM ensures smoother electromagnetic torque production, which is critical for achieving high positional accuracy in robotic joints and end-effectors.

In precision robotic applications such as force-controlled manipulation, assembly operations, and human–robot interaction, even small torque oscillations can lead to vibration, tracking errors, and degraded control performance. The fixed switching frequency and improved voltage synthesis inherent to DTC-SVM minimize these effects, resulting in reduced mechanical stress and improved motion smoothness.

Furthermore, the improved low-speed performance of DTC-SVM enhances torque linearity during slow and fine movements, which are essential for tasks requiring delicate handling and precise positioning. Consequently, DTC-SVM enables robotic actuators to achieve higher accuracy, stability, and repeatability, making it particularly suitable for advanced and precision-oriented robotic systems.

Integrating Space Vector Modulation in DTC reduces torque ripple while retaining fast response times.

A. Conventional DTC in Robotics

Conventional DTC directly controls electromagnetic torque and stator flux using hysteresis comparators and a predefined switching table. This approach offers extremely fast torque response and a simple implementation, making it suitable for robotic systems requiring high dynamic performance.

However, the hysteresis-based switching results in variable switching frequency and relatively high torque ripple. In robotic manipulators and mobile platforms, these characteristics can lead to mechanical vibration, acoustic noise, and reduced positioning accuracy, particularly at low speeds or during precision tasks.

B. DTC-SVM in Robotics

DTC-SVM replaces the hysteresis controllers and switching table with a space-vector modulation strategy. A reference voltage vector is computed based on torque and flux errors and synthesized using SVM, enabling smooth voltage control and fixed switching frequency operation.

This approach significantly reduces torque and flux ripples, improves low-speed performance, and enhances motion smoothness. As a result, DTC-SVM is better suited for robotic applications requiring high precision, such as force-controlled manipulation, collaborative robots, and service robots.

4.1 Adaptive DTC Techniques

Adaptive and fuzzy logic-based methods improve flux estimation and compensate for parameter variations.

4.2 Sensorless DTC

Sensorless approaches remove the need for rotor position sensors, reducing cost and increasing reliability — advantageous in compact robotics.

Space-Vector Modulated Direct Torque Control (DTC-SVM) is an advanced motor control method merging classic DTC's quick dynamics with Space Vector Modulation (SVM) to generate inverter voltage, significantly reducing torque ripple, lowering harmonic distortion, improving efficiency, and achieving constant switching frequency for AC motors (like Induction & PMSM), making it ideal for robotics needing precise, smooth torque control in applications like electric vehicles and servo drives. It works by estimating torque and flux, using PI controllers for voltage references, and then employing SVM to generate optimal inverter switching patterns, providing excellent dynamic response with smoother performance than traditional DTC.

5. Applications in Industry

5.1 Industrial Automation

High-precision tasks like welding, machining, or assembly benefit from DTC's torque control, especially during varying loads.

5.2 Healthcare Robotics

Robotic surgery and rehabilitation robots rely on precise torque control for delicate and adaptive movements. DTC contributes to improved control fidelity.

5.3 Logistics and Service Robots

Warehouse automation platforms require robust and agile motor control to navigate and adapt to dynamic environments.

6. Challenges

- Torque ripple remains a core challenge.
- Noise and vibration due to fast switching may impact sensitive operations.
- Implementation in low-cost embedded systems may require optimization.

7. Future Research Directions

7.1 AI-Assisted DTC

Integration with neural networks and machine learning for predictive torque control.

7.2 Energy-Optimized DTC

Algorithms to minimize power consumption without compromising torque responsiveness.

7.3 Integration with Industry 4.0

Cloud-based monitoring and adaptive tuning for robotics systems.

8. Conclusion

Direct Torque Control has proven to be a robust and efficient control strategy for robotic actuation systems. Its ability to offer high-speed torque regulation, reduced complexity, and compatibility with advanced adaptations (like DTC-SVM and sensorless schemes) makes it highly suitable for the demands of modern robotics. While challenges such as torque ripple persist, ongoing research continues to expand DTC's applicability across diverse robotic platforms.

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