

Original Article

## A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF WIDE-AREA MONITORING AND CONTROL OF POWER SYSTEMS USING PHASOR MEASUREMENT UNITS (PMUS)

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### ABSTRACT

The modern power systems are becoming increasingly complex due to the large-scale interconnections, the integration of renewable energy sources, and the dynamic changes in loads, which require the sophisticated monitoring and control systems. Phasor Measurement Units (PMUs) have led to the creation of Wide-Area Monitoring, Protection, and Control (WAMPAC) systems, capable of transforming the grid, boosting its reliability, stability, and operational efficiency. PMUs are also used to offer time-synchronized measurements (synchro phasors) that can offer real-time insight into the dynamics of a system, which was not possible with traditional SCADA systems. This paper provides an extensive overview of the PMU technology and its application in Wide-Area Monitoring Systems (WAMS), their structure, essential elements, and communication structure. It also discusses key applications like real-time monitoring, state estimation, oscillation detection, fault location, voltage stability assessment, and wide-area control. The study also addresses some of the critical challenges, such as high implementation costs, data management complexities, cybersecurity threats, and communication latency, as well as interoperability issues. Further recent developments, including the combination of PMUs with smart grids, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and Wide-Area Control Systems (WACS) are discussed, as well as future research directions, including optimization of costs, improved security, and autonomous operation of grids. In general, PMU-based WAMS is found as a foundational technology in terms of designing intelligent, resilient, and sustainable power system.

**Keywords:** Phasor Measurement Units (PMUs), Wide-Area Monitoring Systems (WAMS), Wide-Area Monitoring, Protection, and Control (WAMPAC), Synchro-Phasor Technology.

### INTRODUCTION

The contemporary electric power system is rapidly changing with growing electricity demand, adoption of renewable energy sources [Pazderin et al. \(2023\)](#), and the development of the interconnected grid networks. The developments have greatly made the operations of the power systems more dynamic and complex and the real time monitoring and controlling more difficult and critical. Reliability, stability, and security of the system under these dynamic conditions have become an urgent issue to utilities and grid operators.

Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) are traditional monitoring systems that have been used to offer operational visibility [Mohanta et al. \(2016\)](#). Nevertheless, these systems are constrained by low sampling rates and lack of accurate time

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synchronization which limit its capability to record high-speed transient events and dynamic disturbances. With more complex power systems, the constraints of SCADA bring up the necessity of sophisticated monitoring systems that can deliver real-time and precise information about a system [Ashok et al. \(2020\)](#).

A game changer to these issues has been the development of Phasor Measurement Units (PMU) which offer fast, time synchronized measurements called synchro phasors. PMUs are designed to be integrated into Wide-Area Monitoring Systems (WAMS), which can provide visibility across the system, enhance situational awareness, and decision-making abilities [Krommydas et al. \(2025\)](#). With the purpose of aiding the establishment of intelligent and resilient power systems, this paper provides an in-depth survey of PMU-based wide-area monitoring and control, including its basic principles, architecture, use, challenges, and recent developments.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To analyze the role of Phasor Measurement Units (PMUs) in enhancing wide-area monitoring and control of modern power systems.
- To examine the architecture, applications, and challenges associated with PMU-based Wide-Area Monitoring Systems (WAMS).
- To evaluate recent advancements and future directions in PMU technology for developing intelligent, secure, and resilient smart grids.

## FUNDAMENTALS OF PHASOR MEASUREMENT UNITS (PMUS)

Phasor Measurement Units (PMUs) are sophisticated measurement devices in the present power systems that are designed to measure electrical quantities including voltage and current in the form of phasors [Penshanwar et al. \(2015\)](#). A phasor is a quantity that is a combination of both the amplitude and phase of a sinusoidal waveform, which is essential in the analysis of the dynamics of power systems. In contrast to traditional measurement apparatus, PMUs can measure electrical quantities synchronized by time, known as synchro phasors, and can monitor electrical quantities at geographically separated sites.

**Figure 1**



**Figure 1 Phasor Measurement Unit (PMU)** [Nageswara Rao et al. \(2019\)](#)

This coordination is performed by signals received via the Global Positioning System (GPS) that ensures that all PMUs in a network have a common time reference. As a result, system operators can have a cohesive and real-time overview of the grid conditions, which contributes greatly to situational awareness and makes it easier to make decisions.

The other significant feature of PMUs is that they have large sampling rate, which is usually between 30 to 120 samples per second [Lu et al. \(2015\)](#). This is significantly greater than the traditional Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) systems which typically have intervals of 2-4 seconds. The increased frequency of sampling enables PMUs to record any transient events, oscillations, and disturbances that would otherwise be unnoticed in traditional systems.

The components that make a typical PMU are:

- GPS Receiver to synchronize the time.
- Digitization of signals with Analog-to-Digital Converter (ADC)
- Phasor Estimation Unit: To calculate the magnitude and phase angle.
- Communication Module to send information to control centers [Khan et al. \(2018\)](#).

In order to draw the benefits of PMUs compared to traditional systems, a comparative analysis with the SCADA systems is stated in [Table 1](#). The comparison serves to clearly show that PMUs offer better performance (in regard to sampling rate, synchronization, accuracy and real-time monitoring capabilities).

**Table 1**

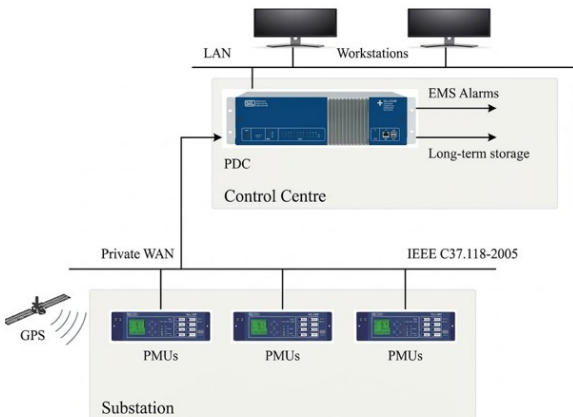
Table 1 Comparison between SCADA and PMU Systems <a href="#">Mohamed et al. (2025)</a>		
Parameter	SCADA System	PMU System
Sampling Rate	2–4 seconds	30–120 samples/second
Time Synchronization	Not synchronized	GPS synchronized
Data Accuracy	Moderate	High
Dynamic Monitoring	Limited	Real-time
Application Scope	Local monitoring	Wide-area monitoring
Response Time	Slow	Fast

As it can be seen based on [Table 1](#), PMUs are much more efficient than SCADA systems as they provide synchronized and high-frequency data, which can be used to provide real-time monitoring and wide-area analysis. Although SCADA could still be used in simple operation control, PMUs are absolutely necessary in the current smart grids where response speed and visibility of the system are important.

#### WIDE-AREA MONITORING AND CONTROL (WAMS) ARCHITECTURE

Wide-Area Monitoring and Control Systems (WAMS) is an important development in the contemporary operation of the power system and combine Phasor Measurement Units (PMUs) in geographically distributed locations [Aljazeera and Toman \(2022\)](#). These systems offer real time system wide visibility of grid conditions, which can allow operators to monitor, analyze and control the power system more efficiently. WAMS has the advantage over traditional localized systems of monitoring that it is able to help coordinate the decision-making process on a regional or national scale, thus increasing grid stability and reliability.

**Figure 2**



**Figure 2 The General Architecture of WAMS [Shankar et al. \(2020\)](#)**

WAMS architecture is developed to support huge amounts of synchronized data produced by PMUs and secure the efficient transmission, processing, and use of this data. It is comprised of a number of interrelated elements that collaborate to provide proper and prompt information to control operations.

The major elements of WAMS are:

- **Phasor Measurement Units (PMUs):** PMUs are equipment placed at substations, charged with the responsibility of measuring synchronized voltage and current phasors in real time [Menezes et al. \(2024\)](#).

- **Phasor Data Concentrators (PDCs):** PDCs are devices that receive data about several PMUs, time-stamp align data, and provide data aggregation.
- **Communication Networks:** The use of high-speed and reliable communication infrastructure (e.g., optical fiber or wireless networks) between PMUs, PDCs and control centers transmits data [Sharma and Dhole \(2016\)](#).
- **Control Centers:** These are central hubs where data gathered is processed to conduct monitoring, visualization and make decisions.

Besides these main elements, the data storage systems are frequently added to preserve historical data to be analyzed further, re-create events, and conduct research.

[Table 2](#) provides a detailed description of the components and their respective functions as illustrated in [Table 2](#) with an emphasis on the role of each component in the WAMS framework.

**Table 2**

Table 2 Components of WAMS and Their Functions <a href="#">Biswal et al. (2023)</a>	
Component	Function Description
PMU	Measures synchronized voltage and current phasors
Phasor Data Concentrator (PDC)	Aggregates and aligns data from multiple PMUs
Communication Network	Transfers data between PMUs and control centers
Control Center	Performs analysis, monitoring, and decision-making
Data Storage System	Stores historical data for analysis

All the components are vital towards the efficient operation of WAMS as depicted in [Table 2](#). PMUs are the main data providers and PDCs guarantee the integrity and synchronization of data. The communication network acts as the backbone of the system that facilitates the smooth transfer of data and control centers use this data to ensure system stability and act in response to disturbances in real time.

### APPLICATIONS OF PMUS IN POWER SYSTEMS

Phasor Measurement Units (PMUs) have revolutionized the monitoring, protection and control of modern power systems by offering time-synchronized data at high speeds [Alhelou \(2019\)](#). Their real-time system dynamics capture capabilities make them very useful in a plethora of applications intended to enhance grid reliability, efficiency and stability. As the complexity of interdependent power networks grows, and renewable energy sources are integrated, PMUs become important in supporting sophisticated operational plans.

Real time monitoring of grid conditions is one of the main uses of PMUs, as synchronized measurements can enable operators to monitor voltage, current, frequency and phase angle throughout the network in real time. This enhances situational awareness and enables quick identification of abnormal operating conditions.

Enhanced state estimation is another key application where PMU data enhances the accuracy and reliability of system models [Palizban \(2015\)](#). Compared to the traditional estimation methods, which use unsynchronized and sparse information to estimate the state of a system, PMU-based state estimation offers accurate and real-time system states, which results in improved operational decisions.

Oscillation detection and stability analysis are also popular applications of PMUs. In disturbances or changes in loads, low-frequency oscillations are typical in power systems. These oscillations can be identified by PMUs in time when the operators can take corrective measures before they can develop into significant stability problems.

Moreover, PMUs enable fault localization and identification because they offer precise and time synchronized measurements. This allows quicker fault location, minimizes system downtime, and enhances reliability of services.

The other important use is in voltage stability where PMUs constantly monitor voltage profiles over the network. This can assist in the avoidance of voltage collapse and stability of the system particularly when the system is running under heavy loads [Arefin et al. \(2022\)](#).

Lastly, PMUs facilitate wide-area protection and control which facilitate automated and adaptive control mechanisms. Such systems are able to react fast to disruptions and, therefore, enhance grid resiliency and reduce the likelihood of cascading failures.

In order to reinforce the discussion of the PMU applications, [Table 3](#) provides a literature-based comparison of the key studies, pointing out the key contributions of the current research in this area.

Table 3

Table 3 Review on PMU Applications in Power Systems		
Author(s) & Year	Focus Area	Key Contribution
Maheswari et al. (2020)	WAMS & PMU fundamentals	Discussed the role of PMUs in wide-area stability, protection, and system security
Ravi et al. (2022)	Micro-PMUs	Reviewed recent advancements and trends in micro-PMUs for distribution systems
Raju et al. (2021)	Cost-effective PMUs	Developed a low-cost PMU model for practical WAMS applications
Monti et al. (2016)	PMU & WAMS overview	Provided comprehensive insights into PMU technology and wide-area monitoring systems
Hojabri et al. (2019)	Distribution system applications	Analyzed PMU applications in distribution networks including monitoring and control
Phadke and Bi (2018)	Protection and control	Highlighted PMU applications in protection schemes and real-time control of power systems

As it can be seen in Table 3, the past has presented extensive research on different facets of PMU applications, such as monitoring, control, protection, and optimization of costs. According to the literature, PMUs are not merely needed in applications at the transmission level but also being implemented in distribution systems in other forms like micro-PMUs. Moreover, the PMU technology is more accessible and scalable due to developments in cost-effective designs and smart control strategies.

### CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Although Phasor Measurement Unit (PMU)-based systems have been found to have profound benefits in improving power system monitoring and control, their large-scale adoption has been linked with various technical, economic and operational problems. These limitations must be addressed to guarantee the successful implementation and maintenance of Wide-Area Monitoring Systems (WAMS).

Figure 3

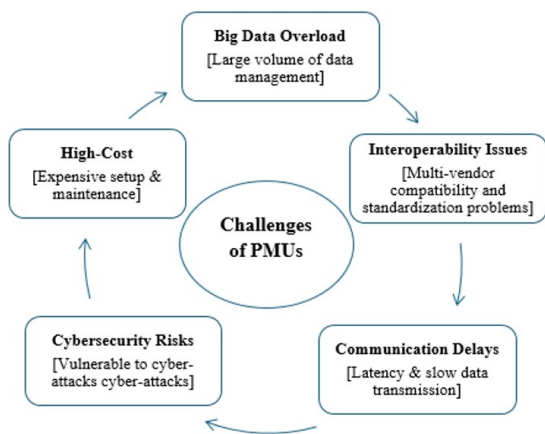


Figure 3 Challenges of PMUs Dixit et al. (2022)

A major challenge is the cost of installation and maintenance which is high. PMUs located over a large geographical region demand hefty investments in hardware such as sensors, GPS synchronization units, communication infrastructure, and Phasor Data Concentrators (PDCs). Moreover, there is the cost of continuous maintenance, calibration, and upgrades of the system, which further adds to the total cost, making it a major setback, especially to the developing world.

The other problem that is of high concern is the huge amount of data produced by PMUs. PMUs generate large volumes of real time data due to their high sampling rates (30-120 samples/second). This data management, storage and processing need complex data management systems, high-performance computing resources, and scalable storage systems to manage, store and process

efficiently [Abdulkareem et al. \(2020\)](#). In the absence of appropriate data handling mechanisms, the system can experience bottlenecks, which impact on performance and reliability.

The risk of cybersecurity is also a significant issue in PMU-based systems. Since WAMS relies on communication networks for transmitting sensitive real-time data, it becomes vulnerable to cyber-attacks such as data manipulation, spoofing, denial-of-service (DoS), and unauthorized access. Any failure of data integrity or availability may result in inaccurate decision-making and may even cause instability in the power system. Thus, there is a need to have strong cybersecurity structures and encryptions.

Moreover, communication delays and latency can have a tremendous effect on the performance of PMU-based applications, particularly those that need real-time control [Samson et al. \(2025\)](#). Even with high-speed data offered in PMUs, network congestion, limited bandwidth, or infrastructure constraints may cause delays in delivering data to support timely decision-making and decrease system effectiveness.

Lastly, there are still problems of interoperability and standardization. PMUs and associated products are commonly produced by various manufacturers and the absence of standardization may cause compatibility problems. Despite the development of standards like IEEE C37.118, differences in implementation can still pose challenges to the tasks of uniting devices into a single system.

## RECENT ADVANCES AND FUTURE SCOPE

These last few years have seen a tremendous progress in the design and implementation of Phasor Measurement Unit (PMU)-based systems due to increased requirement in intelligent, resilient and efficient power grids. These developments are directly connected with the development of smart grid technologies and growing use of renewable energy sources.

The combination of PMUs and smart grids and renewable energy systems is one of the most prominent developments [Aminifar et al. \(2015\)](#). Solar and wind are some of the variable sources of energy that are being increasingly integrated into modern power systems that bring fluctuations and uncertainties into the grid. PMUs make these dynamic conditions visible in real-time, which helps the operators of the systems to maintain the stability of the grid and to guarantee the efficient use of energy.

The other significant development is the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) to analyze PMU data. Predictive analytics, such as fault prediction, anomaly detection, load forecasting, and stability assessment, are applied using these technologies. Through AI and ML, power systems will be able to become proactive, not reactive, and hence minimize the chances of failures and enhance performance [Schofield et al. \(2018\)](#).

The implementation of cloud computing and big data technologies have also augmented the capabilities of PMU-based systems. As PMUs produce much data, cloud services can offer scalable storage and real-time data processing and analysis with high computational power. This enables effective data management, remote accessibility and better decision-making.

Also, the development of Wide-Area Control Systems (WACS) has been made to a great extent [Sneha et al. \(2025\)](#). The systems use real-time PMU data to apply automated and adaptive control measures on large power networks. WACS has the ability to react promptly to disruptions, synchronize control, and preclude cascading failures, thus, improving the system reliability and resilience.

In the future research and development of PMU-based systems, there are various areas that will be concentrated on. The issue of cost reduction is still a priority in order to facilitate its broader implementation especially in developing nations [Kumar and Karthikeyan \(2016\)](#). It is necessary to improve the cybersecurity systems to ensure the safety of critical infrastructure against the new cyber threats. Moreover, the emergence of autonomous and self-reparative grid systems driven by sophisticated analytics and smart control systems is a promising trend to the future of power systems.

## CONCLUSION

This review offers an overview of the concept of Wide-Area Monitoring and Control systems which are facilitated by Phasor Measurement Units (PMUs) and explains why they are essential in improving the observability, reliability and stability of the present-day power systems. This analysis has shown that PMUs, with their high-speed and time-synchronized measurements, enhance real-time monitoring, state estimation, fault detection and stability assessment to a large degree and enable more efficient and informed decision-making. The coordinated control actions and grid resilience against disturbances and cascading failures are achieved by the integration of PMUs into Wide-Area Monitoring Systems (WAMS). Nevertheless, the limitations of the implementation cost, extensive data management needs, cybersecurity risks, delays in communications, and interoperability should be properly overcome to make large-scale implementation. Additionally, new developments such as artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and Wide-Area Control Systems (WACS) have shown a clear shift towards intelligent, automated, and self-healing power grids. In general, PMU-based WAMS will be at the center of creating secure, sustainable, and resilient smart power systems, and future studies will aim to increase efficiency, security, and scalability.

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