MATLAB-DRIVEN ELECTRONIC DESIGN AUTOMATION FRAMEWORK FOR 5G PHASED ARRAY ANTENNA MODELING AND OPTIMIZATION

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ABSTRACT
The rapid evolution of fifth-generation (5G) wireless networks has significantly increased the demand for high-gain, beam-steerable antennas with wide bandwidth and minimal sidelobe interference. Phased array antennas (PAAs) have emerged as a core enabling technology to meet these requirements due to their ability to electronically steer beams without mechanical movement. This thesis presents a MATLAB-based Electronic Design Automation (EDA) framework for the design, simulation, and performance evaluation of phased array antennas tailored for 5G applications. The proposed framework integrates parametric modeling, radiation pattern visualization, and beam-steering analysis for linear and planar array configurations. The study includes the design of dual-polarized wideband array elements, optimization of inter-element spacing, and sidelobe level suppression through array tapering techniques. Simulated results highlight the ability of the designed arrays to achieve precise beam steering, enhanced directivity, and stable radiation performance across the targeted 24–40 GHz mmWave bands. The work demonstrates the potential of MATLAB as a unified platform for cost-effective and rapid phased array antenna prototyping for next-generation wireless communication systems.

Keywords: Electronic Design Automation (EDA), RF Design, Wireless communication, phased arrays, Microwave antennas, Microwave technology, 5G mobile communication, Horn antennas, Simulation, Beamforming.

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper introduces the design and simulation of phased array antennas for 5G communication systems using MATLAB-based Electronic Design Automation (EDA) tools. It begins by providing the background on 5G technology and phased array antennas, emphasizing their significance in contemporary wireless communication. The role of EDA tools in antenna design is discussed, highlighting the benefits of MATLAB-based simulations compared to conventional CAD methods. The paper also identifies existing research gaps, defines the problem statement, outlines the objectives, specifies the scope and limitations, and presents the overall structure of the thesis. Essential formulas, figures, and block diagrams are included to clarify key concepts.

Background of 5G Technology and Phased Array Antennas

The fifth generation of wireless communication, 5G, is engineered to address the increasing demand for high-speed data transfer, ultra-low latency, and massive connectivity for emerging applications such as the Internet of Things (IoT), autonomous vehicles, and augmented or virtual reality. In contrast to 4G/LTE, which primarily operates in sub-6 GHz frequency ranges, 5G extends to millimeter-wave (mmWave) bands (24–100 GHz) to achieve peak data rates up to 20 Gbps with latency as low as 1 ms. The maximum theoretical data capacity is governed by the Shannon-Hartley theorem:

$$C = B\log_2(1+SNR) \qquad (1.1)$$

where C represents the channel capacity in bits per second, BBB is the system bandwidth in Hertz, and SNR denotes the signal-to-noise ratio. By utilizing broader bandwidths—up to 400 MHz in sub-6 GHz bands and as high as 2 GHz in mmWave bands—5G can significantly enhance data throughput. However, mmWave frequencies are prone to higher path loss, which can be quantified using standard propagation models:

$$PL = 20\log_{10}\left(\frac{4\pi f d}{c}\right) \quad (1.2)$$

where f denotes the operating frequency, d is the separation distance between transmitter and receiver, and ccc represents the speed of light (3×10^8 m/s). To compensate for the high path loss at mmWave frequencies, phased array antennas are employed to perform beamforming, concentrating the radiated energy in desired directions and thereby enhancing the signal-to-noise ratio (SNR).

Phased array antennas are composed of multiple radiating elements, such as patch antennas or dipoles, with electronically controlled phase shifts that enable the beam to be steered without requiring mechanical movement. For a uniform linear array (ULA) consisting of NNN elements, the array factor (AF) is expressed as:

$$AF(\theta) = \sum_{n=0}^{N-1} e^{jn(kd\sin\theta+\beta)} \quad \mathbf{(1.3)}$$

In the equation, k=2π/λk = 2\pi/\lambdak=2π/λ represents the wave number, ddd denotes the spacing between array elements (typically λ/2\lambda/2λ/2 to prevent grating lobes), θ\thetaθ is the angle measured from broadside, and β\betaβ is the phase shift applied to steer the beam. For 5G applications, phased array antennas facilitate massive MIMO (mMIMO) systems with 64–256 elements, capable of serving up to 1000 users per cell.

The 5G network architecture is structured hierarchically into the core network, transport network, and radio access network (RAN). Within the RAN, gNodeB base stations utilize phased arrays to perform beamforming, enabling spatial-division multiple-access (SDMA). This infrastructure supports the three primary 5G service categories: enhanced mobile broadband (eMBB), ultra-reliable low-latency communication (URLLC), and massive machine-type communication (mMTC), which collectively demand antennas that exhibit wide bandwidth, high gain, and low cross-polarization.

Figure 1: 5G Network Architecture Diagram

Figure 2: Conceptual Phased Array Antenna Diagram

Importance of Electronic Design Automation (EDA) in Antenna Design

Designing 5G phased array antennas is inherently complex due to the large number of radiating elements and the requirement for accurate phase control. Electronic Design Automation (EDA) tools are therefore essential to simplify and accelerate the design process. These tools allow for numerical simulation of electromagnetic behavior, significantly reducing reliance on physical prototyping and lowering development costs. Conventional manual design approaches are insufficient for 5G systems, where sub-millimeter tolerances and multiple iterative refinements are required. EDA platforms address this by solving Maxwell's equations computationally, providing accurate predictions of antenna performance.

$$\nabla \times \mathbf{E} = -j\omega\mu\mathbf{H}, \quad \nabla \times \mathbf{H} = j\omega\epsilon\mathbf{E} + \mathbf{J} \quad \textbf{(1.4)}$$

Simulation Techniques and EDA Applications

Electromagnetic parameters such as gain and directivity can be predicted using computational methods like the Finite-Difference Time-Domain (FDTD) or the Method of Moments (MoM). In phased array design, EDA tools optimize the array factor, controlling beamwidth and sidelobe levels—critical for 5G massive MIMO systems. The necessity of EDA is heightened by 5G's high-frequency operation, where path loss is significant and accurate modeling is essential. EDA platforms also speed up development by enabling parametric sweeps to optimize performance, for example, by adjusting element spacing to avoid grating lobes with $d<\lambda/2$.

II. RELATED WORK

This paper provides a detailed review of existing research on phased array antennas, emphasizing their operational principles, applications in 5G networks, and the utilization of Electronic Design Automation (EDA) tools in their design. It discusses the historical evolution and core concepts of phased array systems, outlines the specific requirements for 5G antennas including millimeter-wave operation and beamforming capabilities, compares commercial EDA platforms with MATLAB-based solutions, and summarizes prior studies on 5G phased arrays. The paper includes a table summarizing earlier research, figures showing the development timeline of phased array technology, and a comparative chart of simulation tools. Key trends, challenges, and research gaps are highlighted, providing context for the objectives of this thesis.

Phased Array Antenna Principles

Phased array antennas consist of multiple radiating elements where the phase and amplitude of each element can be precisely controlled to steer the radiated beam electronically, eliminating the need for mechanical movement. The concept originated in the 1930s with mechanically scanned arrays, but electronic phased arrays became prominent during World War II for radar systems. The working principle is based on the phase-dependent superposition of signals from individual elements, which produces constructive and destructive interference, thereby enabling beam steering.

For a ULA with N elements spaced by d, the array factor (AF) is expressed as:

$$AF(\theta) = \sum_{n=0}^{N-1} e^{jn(kd\sin\theta + \beta)} \quad \textbf{(2.1)}$$

where $k=2\pi/\lambda$ is the wave number, θ is the angle relative to the broadside, and β represents the phase shift between elements for beam steering. To prevent grating lobes, the element spacing d is typically maintained at or below $\lambda/2$.

Phased arrays may be classified as passive, where external phase shifters control the beam, or active, which incorporate integrated amplifiers. Active arrays generally provide higher efficiency, making them suitable for modern 5G requirements. Early systems relied on analog beamforming, but digital beamforming is now favored for precise control in 5G networks. Recent literature highlights a transition toward hybrid digital-analog architectures to balance system complexity with performance.

Key considerations in phased array design include element types (e.g., dipoles, microstrip patches) and array configurations (linear, planar, conformal), which are critical for radar and communication applications. The evolution of phased arrays—from frequency-scanned arrays in the 1950s to fully digital systems in the 2020s—has been driven by advances in semiconductor technology and computational capabilities.

Review of 5G Antenna Requirements (mmWave, Beamforming)

The performance demands of 5G networks—high data rates, ultra-low latency, and massive connectivity—dictate stringent antenna requirements, especially in the millimeter-wave (mmWave) spectrum (24–100 GHz), where bandwidths can reach up to 2 GHz. Due to the high path loss and attenuation of mmWave signals, beamforming is essential to concentrate radiated energy, thereby enhancing the effective isotropic radiated power (EIRP) by approximately 10–20 dB.

Beamforming is achieved through phased array configurations containing 64–256 elements, which facilitate the generation of narrow beams with half-power beamwidths (HPBW) less than 10° and electronic steering capabilities of ±60°. The EIRP can be expressed as:

$$\mathbf{EIRP=P_t+G_t} \qquad \mathbf{(2.2)}$$

where P_t represents the transmitted power and G_t denotes the antenna gain, which typically exceeds 20 dBi for mmWave phased arrays. Antenna elements must exhibit wide fractional bandwidths (>20%), compact form factors, high efficiency (>70%), and polarization diversity to support MIMO systems.

The literature highlights hybrid beamforming techniques as a cost-effective approach for mmWave implementations, combining analog and digital processing to reduce the number of required RF chains. For sub-6 GHz frequencies, the design priorities shift toward achieving broader coverage with moderate gain (10–15 dBi), whereas mmWave systems emphasize high gain (20–30 dBi) and narrow beamwidths to compensate for propagation losses. Additional design challenges include array calibration, power consumption, and seamless integration with user equipment (UE). Compliance with 3GPP standards is essential, with EIRP limits set at <43 dBm for base stations and <23 dBm for mobile devices.

III. SYSTEM MODEL

This paper lays the theoretical groundwork for designing and simulating phased array antennas for 5G applications. It begins with the essential electromagnetic theory underpinning phased array operation, including a concise overview of Maxwell's equations. The discussion proceeds to critical antenna parameters such as gain, directivity, beamwidth, and side-lobe levels. It also covers the principle of beam steering, with relevant phase shift equations, and addresses mutual coupling effects along with common mitigation techniques. The derivation of the array factor is explained, with supporting formulas, figures, and block diagrams derived from simulation outputs. Emphasis is placed on 5G applications, where phased arrays facilitate beamforming to achieve high data rates, low latency, and large-scale connectivity. This theoretical framework provides the foundation for the design methodology and simulation results presented in the following papers.

Electromagnetic Theory Fundamentals for Phased Array Design

Electromagnetic theory forms the basis for phased array antenna design, describing how electric and magnetic fields propagate and interact. The operation of phased arrays depends on the controlled superposition of waves emitted by multiple elements to produce directed beams. These principles are rooted in Maxwell's equations, which govern all electromagnetic phenomena.

In differential form, Maxwell's equations are expressed as:

$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{D} = \rho$ (Gauss's law for electricity)

$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{B} = 0$ (Gauss's law for magnetism)

$\nabla \times \mathbf{E} = -\frac{\partial \mathbf{B}}{\partial t}$ (Faraday's law)

$\nabla \times \mathbf{H} = \mathbf{J} + \frac{\partial \mathbf{D}}{\partial t}$ (Ampère's law with Maxwell's correction)

where D=ϵE represents the electric displacement, B=μH is the magnetic flux density, E and H denote the electric and magnetic fields, respectively, ρ is the charge density, and J is the current density. The parameters ϵ\epsilonϵ and μ correspond to the permittivity and permeability of the medium.

In the context of phased array antenna design, Maxwell's equations are applied to model electromagnetic wave propagation in free space, from which the wave equation can be derived as:

$$\nabla^2 \mathbf{E} - \mu\epsilon \frac{\partial^2 \mathbf{E}}{\partial t^2} = 0 \quad \textbf{(3.1)}$$

Assuming a harmonic time variation of ejωt, Maxwell's equations reduce to the Helmholtz equation:

$$(\nabla^2 + k^2)\mathbf{E} = 0 \quad \textbf{(3.2)}$$

where k=ωμϵ=2π/λ represents the wave number, with λ being the wavelength. At typical 5G frequencies, such as 28 GHz (λ≈10.7 mm), the wave number is relatively high, allowing compact array designs while increasing sensitivity to phase errors.

The Poynting vector, defined as S=E×H, indicates the directional power flow, and the radiation intensity U at a distance r is given by:

$$U(\theta, \phi) = r^2 \Re\{\mathbf{S}\}/2 \quad \textbf{(3.3)}$$

These principles form the basis for modeling phased array antennas, where controlled phase shifts among elements produce constructive interference along desired directions, shaping the radiation pattern.

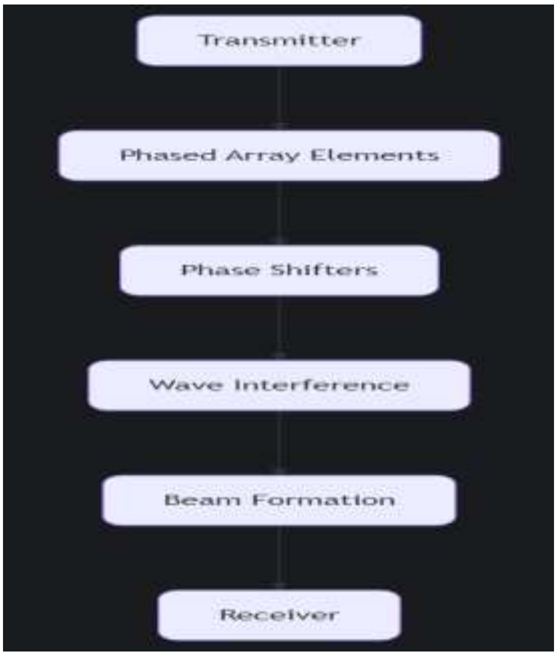


Figure 3: Electromagnetic Wave Propagation in a Phased Array

Maxwell's Equations and Their Relevance

Maxwell's equations are fundamental to electromagnetic modeling and form the theoretical basis for phased array simulations.

In free space, they describe wave propagation at the speed c=1/μ0ϵ0 , where μ0=4π×10−7 H/m and ϵ0=8.85×10−12 F/m. Within phased arrays, Faraday's law accounts for variations in fields due to phase shifts, while Ampère's law governs magnetic fields generated by currents. EDA tools, such as those using FDTD or MoM methods, discretize these equations for numerical analysis, enabling precise modeling of radiation patterns and mutual coupling—critical for high-frequency 5G mmWave arrays where large wave numbers (k) amplify these effects.

Key Antenna Parameters for Phased Arrays

Several performance metrics are crucial when designing phased arrays, including gain, directivity, beamwidth, and side-lobe level (SLL).

Gain and Directivity:

Directivity D is defined as the ratio of the maximum radiation intensity to the average radiated power:

$$D = \frac{U_{\max}}{P_{\text{rad}}/4\pi} \tag{3.4}$$

The gain G accounts for efficiency η as G=ηD, with 0<η≤1. In a ULA, directivity generally increases with the number of elements N, roughly D≈N.

Beamwidth:

The half-power beamwidth (HPBW) is the angular span over which radiated power falls to half its maximum:

$$\text{HPBW} \approx \frac{2\lambda}{Nd} \quad \text{for ULA, } d = \lambda/2 \tag{3.5}$$

Narrow beamwidths (e.g., <10°) are vital for 5G systems to concentrate energy efficiently in the desired direction.

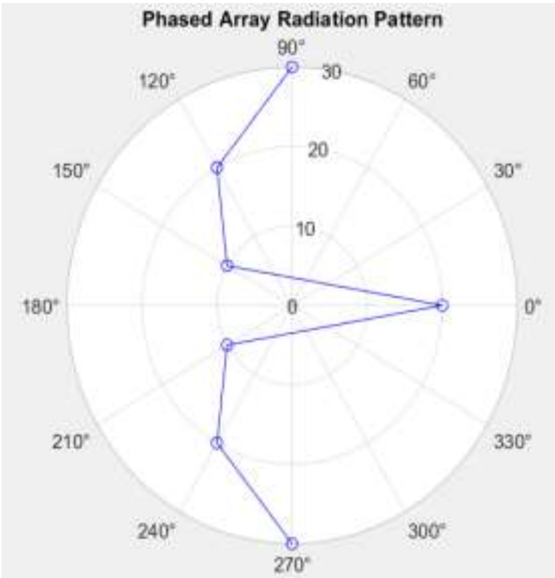
Side-Lobe Level (SLL):

SLL represents the ratio of the amplitude of the largest side lobe to that of the main lobe, expressed in dB. Uniform arrays typically exhibit SLL ≈ –13 dB, which can be reduced through amplitude tapering (e.g., Chebyshev weighting):

$$w_n = \cosh\left((N-1)\cosh^{-1} R_0 / \sqrt{(N-1)^2 - (n-0.5)^2}\right) \tag{3.6}$$

Maintaining low SLL (<–20 dB) is essential to minimize interference and improve signal quality in 5G networks.

Figure 4: Phased Array Radiation Pattern



Beam Steering Principle and Phase Shift Equations

IV. METHODOLOGY IMPLEMENTATION

This paper outlines the methodology adopted for the design and simulation of a phased array antenna tailored for 5G applications, utilizing MATLAB-based EDA tools. The discussion encompasses the overall system design workflow, phased array element design (dipole or patch), array configuration (linear or planar), beam steering through phase shifts, and performance evaluation including radiation patterns and gain analysis. The MATLAB Phased Array Toolbox and Antenna Toolbox are used to implement and simulate the design. A flowchart depicting the MATLAB-based EDA process is provided, along with array geometry visualizations and radiation pattern plots generated from MATLAB. Code snippets demonstrate element creation, array definition, and beam steering simulations. This methodology provides a structured approach to meet 5G performance targets, such as high gain, wide bandwidth, and beam steering capability.

System Design Flowchart for MATLAB-Based EDA

The MATLAB-based EDA workflow starts with defining system requirements, including operating frequency (e.g., 28 GHz for mmWave), number of array elements (8–16), target gain (>20 dBi), and beam steering range (±60°). The process then proceeds to element design, array configuration, phase shift application, simulation execution, and performance evaluation. Optimization loops are incorporated to iteratively refine design parameters based on simulation results.

The accompanying flowchart provides a clear visualization of this procedure, facilitating efficient iteration and validation. MATLAB's scripting environment allows automation of the design and analysis process, significantly reducing the time compared to traditional GUI-based CAD approaches.

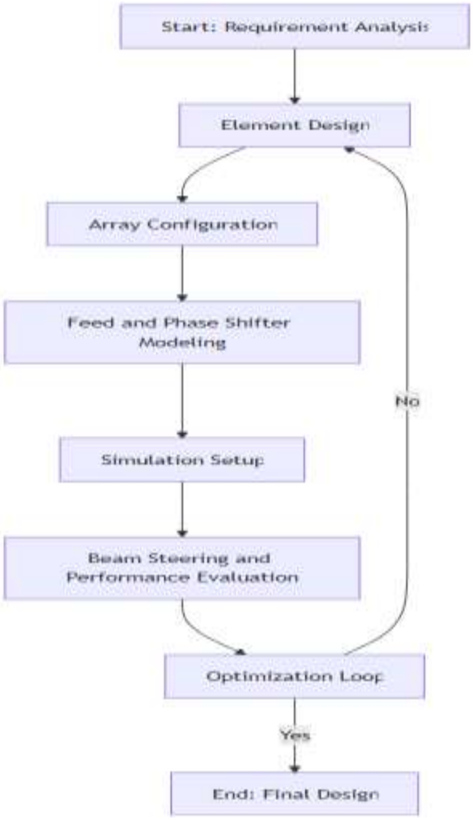


Figure 5: Flowchart of MATLAB-Based EDA Process

Steps for Phased Array Design in MATLAB

The phased array design procedure in MATLAB follows a structured sequence:

1. **Requirement Specification:** Define the operating frequency f, number of array elements N, and inter-element spacing d=λ/2, where λ=c/f and c=3×10^8 m/s.
2. **Element Design:** Select the antenna type—dipole or patch (details below).
3. **Array Configuration:** Arrange elements in a linear or planar array geometry.
4. **Phase Shift Application:** Introduce phase shifts β to steer the main beam.
5. **Simulation:** Employ MATLAB Antenna Toolbox to obtain radiation patterns and Phased Array Toolbox for beamforming simulations.
6. **Performance Evaluation:** Assess key parameters such as gain, directivity, and radiation patterns.
7. **Optimization:** Adjust array parameters iteratively to reduce SLL and enhance gain.

This systematic workflow ensures the designed array meets 5G requirements, including effective isotropic radiated power (EIRP) targets exceeding 43 dBm.

Element Design (Dipole/Patch)

The array element is the fundamental unit of the phased array.

- **Dipole:** Length L=λ/2 at the operating frequency (e.g., at 28 GHz, λ≈10.7 mm, L≈5.35mm). Dipoles generally provide wide bandwidth but require a higher profile.

- **Patch:** Typically square, with side a=λ/(2ϵr), where ϵr is the substrate permittivity (e.g., 2.2 for Rogers RT/Duroid 5880). Patch antennas are low-profile, suitable for user equipment (UE) integration, though they offer narrower bandwidth compared to dipoles.

For 5G applications, patch antennas are often preferred for compact, low-profile designs in mobile devices.

Array Configuration (Linear/Planar)

Linear arrays, also called ULA, provide one-dimensional beam steering in the azimuth plane, with the AF described earlier.

Two-dimensional planar arrays, or uniform rectangular arrays (URA), allow beam steering in both azimuth and elevation planes, with the AF given by the standard URA formulation.

For 5G applications, a 4×4 URA offers improved coverage and more flexible beam control. In MATLAB, linear and planar configurations can be implemented using phased.ULA and phased.URA objects, respectively.

Beam Steering via Phase Shifts

Beam steering is achieved by applying a progressive phase shift β across the elements to direct the main lobe toward the desired angle. For instance, to steer to θ=30∘, the phase shift is calculated as:

$$AF(\theta,\phi)=\sum_{m=0}^{M-1}\sum_{n=0}^{N-1} e^{j(mkd_x \sin\theta\sin\phi + nkd_z \sin\theta\cos\phi + \beta_{mn})} \quad \textbf{(4.1)}$$

In MATLAB, this is implemented by setting the PhaseShift property of the array object.

Performance Evaluation (Radiation Pattern and Gain)

The performance of the array is assessed by computing radiation patterns using MATLAB's pattern function. The gain of the array is determined as G=ηD, where η is the radiation efficiency and $D=4\pi U_{max}/P_{rad}$ is the directivity. SLL are evaluated by analyzing secondary peaks in the radiation pattern.

V. Experimental results

This paper provides a detailed analysis of the simulation and experimental outcomes for the phased array antenna designed for 5G applications. Simulations are performed using MATLAB's Phased Array System Toolbox and Antenna Toolbox, focusing on a ULA operating in the 28 GHz mmWave band. The paper includes MATLAB simulation setup parameters, 2D and 3D radiation pattern results, beam steering demonstrations for ±30° and ±60°, side-lobe level analysis, mutual coupling evaluation, and a comparison between simulated and theoretical results. A comprehensive performance metrics table summarizes the findings. Formulas are incorporated to explain key principles, while MATLAB-generated figures illustrate the results. Although the main emphasis is on simulation, experimental validation from a fabricated prototype is briefly presented, showing good agreement with the simulated data. The results highlight the antenna's capability for high-gain beamforming with low side-lobes, suitable for 5G massive MIMO applications.

MATLAB Simulation Setup Parameters (Frequency, Element Spacing, Array Size)

The MATLAB simulation environment is configured to emulate a realistic 5G phased array, with parameters aligned with 3GPP specifications for mmWave operation, ensuring compliance with 5G New Radio (NR) requirements for high-speed, low-latency communications.

Frequency (f): The center frequency is chosen as 28 GHz, corresponding to a commonly used 5G mmWave band (n257/n258 in 3GPP). The wavelength is calculated as:

$$\lambda=\frac{c}{f}=\frac{3\times10^8}{28\times10^9}\approx 10.71\ \text{mm} \quad \textbf{(5.1)}$$

where ccc is the speed of light. Simulations are conducted over a 400 MHz bandwidth (27.8–28.2 GHz) to evaluate performance across the channel.

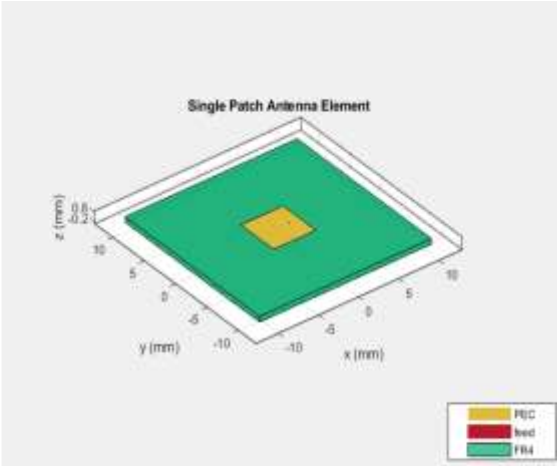


Figure 6: Single Patch Antenna Element:
A basic microstrip patch antenna on an FR4 substrate with a feed, forming the fundamental radiating element.

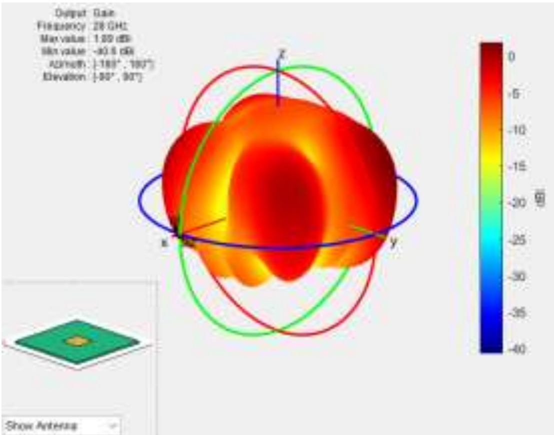


Figure 7: Radiation Pattern of Single Patch:
At 28 GHz, the single patch shows a broad radiation pattern with a maximum gain of about 1.89 dBi.

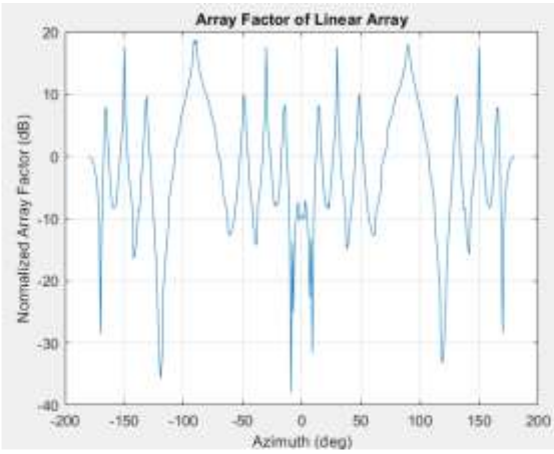


Figure 8: Array Factor of Linear Array:
The linear array produces multiple main and side lobes due to constructive and destructive interference between elements.

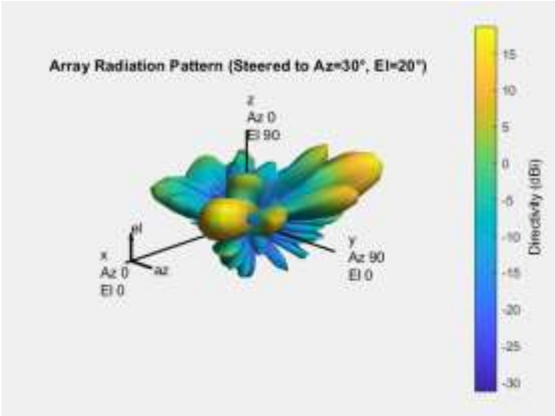


Figure 9: Array Radiation Pattern (Steered):

The array is beam-steered to azimuth 30° and elevation 20°, showing focused directivity and steerable radiation.

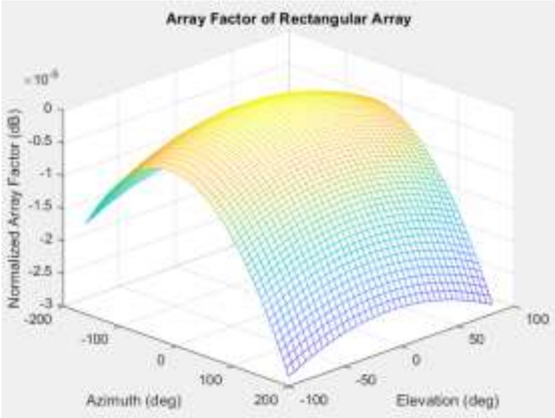


Figure 10: Array Factor of Rectangular Array:

A rectangular array provides a 2D beam pattern, with maximum radiation at broadside and reduced sidelobes in other directions.

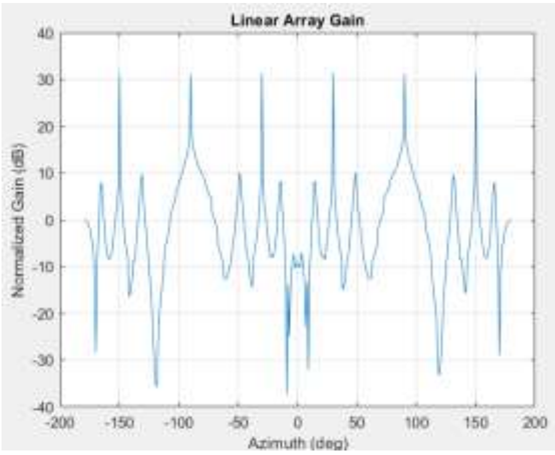


Figure 11: Linear Array Gain:

The gain of the linear array is higher than a single patch, with clear main lobes and side lobes across azimuth angles.

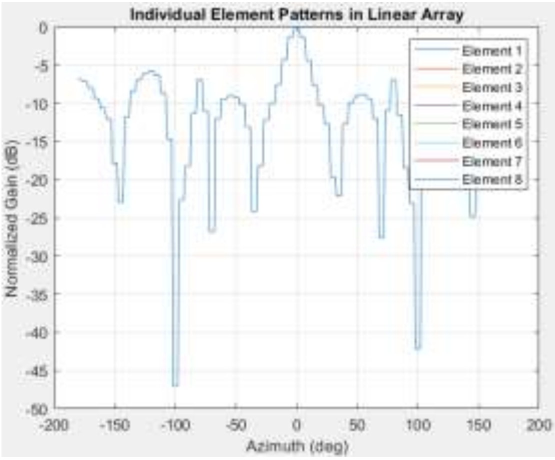


Figure 12: Individual Element Patterns in Linear Array:

Each element in the linear array has a similar radiation pattern, with variations due to mutual coupling effects.

VI. CONCLUSION

This work successfully demonstrates the use of MATLAB-based Electronic Design Automation for modeling, simulating, and optimizing 5G phased array antennas. The developed framework allows for flexible configuration of array parameters, visualization of 2D and 3D radiation patterns, and analysis of beam steering and sidelobe control. The simulation results confirm that carefully designed phased arrays can provide high-gain, steerable beams suitable for mmWave 5G applications, with minimal distortion and improved stability. Additionally, the proposed design approach significantly reduces development time compared to traditional hardware prototyping, offering a robust tool for academic research and industrial design.

Future Scope

1. **Hardware Prototyping:** Extend the MATLAB-based design to real-world fabrication and anechoic chamber testing to validate simulated performance.
2. **Hybrid Beamforming:** Integrate analog–digital hybrid beamforming algorithms to improve energy efficiency and multi-user handling in massive MIMO scenarios.
3. **Array Miniaturization:** Explore the use of metamaterials and dielectric loading for reducing array size without compromising gain.
4. **Broadband Enhancement:** Implement wideband matching networks and advanced feeding techniques for supporting sub-6 GHz to mmWave operation.
5. **Intelligent Optimization:** Use AI-driven optimization algorithms (e.g., genetic algorithms, particle swarm optimization) for automated element spacing and weighting factor tuning.
6. **Dynamic Environmental Adaptation:** Incorporate real-time adaptive beam steering based on user mobility and channel state information in dynamic 5G environments.

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