Research Direction: Quantum-AI Convergence for Low-Latency Satellite 6G Networks

Phuc Hao Do

1. Research Vision

The rapid development of 6G networks necessitates ultra-low-latency, high-reliability communication in highly dynamic environments. Satellite communications, particularly in hybrid GEO–LEO architectures, play a pivotal role in expanding global coverage and enabling space-air-ground integrated networks (SAGIN). However, latency remains a critical bottleneck in satellite networks due to high propagation delay, dynamic topology, and limited bandwidth.

This research aims to integrate Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Quantum-Inspired Optimization to reduce end-to-end latency and optimize resource management in 6G satellite communication systems. Specifically, I focus on developing:

- Quantum-Inspired Federated Learning (QIFL) for client selection in GEO satellite networks.
- AI-enhanced Reconfigurable Intelligent Surface (RIS) control in THz LEO–GEO links.
- Multi-modal AI architectures for real-time latency prediction and network reconfiguration.
- Survey and system-level frameworks that converge AI, Quantum Optimization, and Satellite 6G.

2. Key Research Objectives

O1. Design quantum-inspired client selection strategies for Federated Learning in satellite networks to minimize model aggregation latency under communication constraints.

O2. Develop AI-based control mechanisms for RIS-assisted THz links, applying reinforcement learning or quantum optimization to enhance SNR and reduce link instability.

O3. Build multi-modal AI models that fuse weather, satellite positioning, and network metrics to predict delay and optimize routing in near real-time.

O4. Establish a unified framework and benchmarking toolkit for evaluating AI and quantum-based algorithms in satellite 6G settings.

3. Planned Research Outputs (12–24 Months)

A. Research Papers

- **Quantum-Inspired Client Scheduling for Low-Latency Federated Learning in Satellite Networks**
  Venue: IEEE TWC / Globecom / ICC

- **Learning-Based Phase Shift Optimization of RIS in THz Satellite Links**
  Venue: IEEE TCOM / VTC / Journal of Optical Communications
- **Multi-modal Latency Prediction in Satellite-Edge 6G using Deep Fusion Networks**
  Venue: ACM TOSN / NeurIPS Workshop (AI4Comm)
- **Quantum-AI Convergence for Low-Latency Satellite 6G: A Survey and Vision**
  Venue: IEEE Communications Surveys & Tutorials / ACM Computing Surveys

B. Prototype and Tools

- **Q-FL-Sim**: A simulation environment for Federated Learning over GEO networks with quantum-inspired client selection.
- **RIS-QOpt**: A Python-based library for RIS phase control using QAOA and Deep RL.
- **LatencyPredict-MM**: A multi-modal delay prediction model using real-world and simulated satellite data.

4. Timeline and Milestones

- **Month 1–2**: Conduct systematic literature review on quantum-inspired optimization in communication networks.
- **Month 3–5**: Develop and evaluate Q-FL-Sim with client selection algorithms (baseline vs. quantum-inspired).
- **Month 6–9**: Design RIS-QOpt with THz link simulator; submit first technical paper.
- **Month 9–12**: Publish survey paper; develop multi-modal latency prediction models.
- **Year 2**: Extend work to edge deployment and cross-layer optimization for full 6G satellite-stack.

5. Broader Impact

This research will contribute to the advancement of ultra-reliable low-latency communications (URLLC) in 6G and provide open-source tools, datasets, and benchmarking protocols for the research community. It paves the way for secure, adaptive, and intelligent satellite communication systems capable of supporting critical applications such as remote surgery, emergency response, and global-scale edge intelligence.

1. Quantum-Inspired Federated Learning for GEO/LEO Satellite Networks

Objective: Develop a quantum-inspired client selection mechanism for Federated Learning (FL) in hybrid GEO/LEO satellite networks to reduce model aggregation latency and improve training efficiency.

Problem: Traditional FL suffers from high aggregation latency in satellite networks due to long propagation delays, limited bandwidth, and heterogeneous client availability. Random or greedy client selection leads to suboptimal communication schedules.

Proposed Approach:

- Formulate the client selection problem as a delay-aware optimization problem (e.g., minimizing maximum transmission time).
- Relax the problem into a convex approximation using log-sum-exp or entropy regularization.
- Apply Quantum-Inspired Optimization (e.g., QUBO formulation solved via Ising model or simulated annealing) to select clients with minimal communication cost.
- Compare against baseline methods: Random, Greedy (bandwidth-based), Delay-Only.

Implementation Plan:

- Month 1–2: Build FL simulation using CNN on MNIST or CIFAR with variable satellite delay and bandwidth conditions.
- Month 3: Implement QUBO formulation for client selection and test with simulated delay profiles.
- Month 4: Evaluate performance (accuracy, training time, communication cost).
- Month 5: Write and submit paper.

Expected Contributions:

- A new quantum-inspired FL client selection framework tailored for satellite networks.
- Open-source simulator with latency modeling over GEO/LEO topologies.
- Benchmark against state-of-the-art FL schedulers in satellite settings.

Target Venue: IEEE TWC, IEEE JSAC (special issue on 6G), ICC, Globecom.

2. AI-Enhanced RIS Phase Control in THz Satellite Links using Quantum Optimization

Objective: Design AI-enhanced phase control algorithms for RIS (Reconfigurable Intelligent Surfaces) in THz-based satellite communication using quantum-inspired optimization.

Problem: RIS has shown potential to mitigate path loss and enhance channel quality in THz satellite links. However, real-time control of RIS phase shifts is challenging due to high-dimensional optimization and dynamic channel conditions.

Proposed Approach:

- Model THz satellite-to-ground channel incorporating RIS elements (e.g., LEO-GEO hybrid).
- Use Deep Reinforcement Learning (e.g., PPO, SAC) to control RIS adaptively based on channel feedback.
- Integrate Quantum-Inspired Search (e.g., QAOA-inspired exploration or quantum-behaved PSO) to enhance convergence speed in high-dimensional phase space.

Implementation Plan:

- Month 1–2: Build RIS-THz channel simulator using existing THz path loss models.
- Month 3: Train DRL-based controller; integrate Q-inspired search heuristics.

- Month 4: Compare with traditional optimization (greedy, genetic, PSO).
- Month 5: Submit paper with analysis on SNR gain, throughput, and energy efficiency.

Expected Contributions:

- Hybrid DRL + Q-inspired RIS phase control algorithm.
- First evaluation of such control over THz LEO–GEO satellite networks.
- Contribution to RIS-based physical layer design in 6G satellite communications.

Target Venue: IEEE TCOM, IEEE Access, Journal of Optical Communications.

3. Multi-Modal Delay Prediction in Satellite-Edge 6G using Hybrid Quantum-Classical Networks

Objective: Build a multi-modal AI model to predict end-to-end latency in satellite-edge 6G networks using hybrid quantum-classical architectures.

Problem: Delay in satellite networks is highly non-linear and depends on many contextual factors (weather, traffic load, satellite position). Existing methods often use unimodal or shallow predictors that fail under dynamic conditions.

Proposed Approach:

- Collect or simulate multi-modal input: satellite position, weather data, traffic statistics, past delay logs.
- Design a deep fusion model combining CNN (spatial), LSTM (temporal), and tabular embeddings (metadata).
- Use quantum neural network (QNN) layers or quantum kernel methods in the fusion stage to enhance pattern discovery.

Implementation Plan:

- Month 1–2: Data preparation from datasets (e.g., WetLinks or simulated GEO link traces).
- Month 3: Model design and training on delay prediction task.
- Month 4: Ablation study comparing classical fusion vs. hybrid Q-classical fusion.
- Month 5: Paper writing and submission.

Expected Contributions:

- First multi-modal delay predictor for satellite-edge 6G using quantum layers.
- Evaluation of quantum-enhanced learning in dynamic networking environments.
- Dataset and open-source model for community use.

Target Venue: ACM TOSN, NeurIPS Workshop on AI for Communications.

4. Survey: Quantum-Inspired Optimization for Next-Gen Satellite Communication

Objective: Conduct a comprehensive survey and propose a roadmap on how quantum-inspired optimization methods can be applied to satellite communication systems, with a focus on 6G.

Problem: Despite growing interest, there is no unified resource summarizing how Q-inspired methods (e.g., QUBO, Ising solvers, QAOA, variational methods) are or can be applied to satellite-specific tasks such as routing, beamforming, scheduling, and learning.

Proposed Structure:

- Introduction to satellite 6G challenges (latency, energy, scheduling, capacity).
- Fundamentals of quantum and quantum-inspired optimization.
- Mapping of satellite network problems to QUBO, QAOA, and quantum heuristics.
- Review of current works in Quantum-FL, RIS control, satellite routing, beamforming.
- Open challenges and future directions.

Implementation Plan:

- Month 1–2: Collect and categorize existing literature (approx. 100+ references).
- Month 3: Create structured taxonomy + diagrams.
- Month 4: Draft and revise; prepare for survey submission.

Expected Contributions:

- First consolidated review of quantum-inspired optimization in satellite communications.
- Taxonomy, benchmark problem formulations, and open research agenda.
- Foundational paper to support further theoretical and applied studies.

Target Venue: ACM Computing Surveys, IEEE Communications Surveys & Tutorials.