



# Generic Vehicle Architecture and Open Systems Architecture

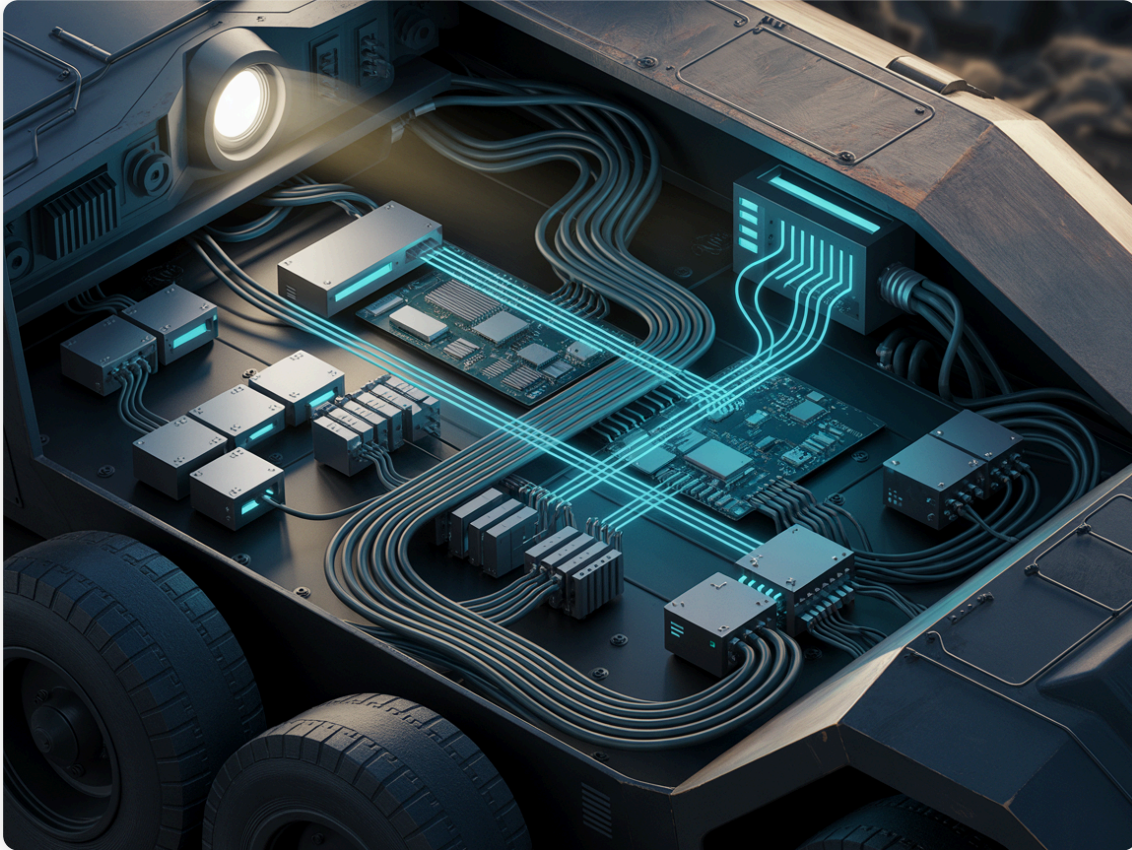
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A Strategic Whitepaper by Astute Systems

3 January 2026



# Generic Vehicle Architecture and Open Systems Architecture: Enabling Strategic Agility in Modern Defence



*Generic Vehicle Architecture (GVA) developed under Land Open Systems Architecture (LOSA) Initiative*

## Executive Summary

The landscape of modern warfare demands unprecedented agility, rapid technological insertion, and cost-effective through-life capability management. Traditional, proprietary military systems, characterized by their stove-piped architectures, struggle to meet these evolving requirements, leading to spiraling costs, prolonged upgrade cycles, and increasing technological obsolescence. This whitepaper, authored by Astute Systems, examines the transformative potential of Open Systems Architecture (OSA), with a specific focus on Generic Vehicle Architecture (GVA) as a critical enabler for land and naval platforms.

GVA, defined by standards like DEF STAN 23-09, provides a standardized, modular framework for the electronic and electrical architecture of military vehicles. By decoupling hardware from software and standardizing interfaces, GVA facilitates rapid technology insertion, reduces integration costs, and mitigates obsolescence risks. This inherent flexibility offers a profound strategic advantage, as evidenced by the adaptive nature of conflicts such as the Russia-Ukraine war, and is crucial for maintaining a competitive edge against technologically advanced adversaries. The principles of GVA are highly applicable to the naval domain, promising similar benefits in ship and submarine system integration. Furthermore, the adoption of a unified Data Distribution Service (DDS) data bus

empowers advanced capabilities like Usage and Condition Monitoring (UCM) and sophisticated Battle Management, transforming disparate systems into a cohesive, intelligent network that significantly enhances operational readiness and combat effectiveness.

Astute Systems, as a leading UK-based technology company specializing in defence and enterprise solutions, advocates for the widespread adoption of GVA and OSA. This paper outlines the benefits, explores strategic implications, and provides recommendations for defence organizations seeking to future-proof their platforms and achieve decisive overmatch in an increasingly complex global security environment.

## 1. Introduction & Background

The evolution of military technology has historically been characterized by bespoke, tightly integrated systems, often developed by a single prime contractor. While this approach delivered robust capabilities, it has inadvertently created an ecosystem of proprietary "black boxes" that are expensive to upgrade, difficult to integrate with third-party components, and prone to rapid obsolescence. In an era where technological advantage can shift rapidly, and adversaries are increasingly adept at exploiting vulnerabilities or adopting commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) innovations, this traditional model is no longer sustainable.

The imperative for change has driven the defence sector towards a paradigm shift: Open Systems Architecture (OSA). OSA is an architectural approach that employs open standards, interfaces, and protocols to enable modularity, interoperability, and competition among suppliers. It champions the concept of "plug-and-play" functionality, allowing for components from different vendors to be easily integrated and upgraded without requiring extensive and costly system redesigns.

At the forefront of this shift, particularly within the land domain, is Generic Vehicle Architecture (GVA). GVA is a specific implementation of OSA principles tailored for military vehicles, encapsulating not just hardware and software but also power, data, and human-machine interface (HMI) standards. Its primary goal is to standardize the electronic and electrical architecture of ground platforms, much like other open standards aim to do for avionics (e.g., FACE™) or naval combat systems (e.g., SOSA™ aligned efforts). By embracing GVA, defence forces can unlock unprecedented levels of agility, cost-efficiency, and technological superiority, fundamentally altering their ability to respond to and shape future conflicts.

## 2. Current State Analysis: The Imperative for Open Systems

The current state of many defence platforms is a testament to the challenges posed by legacy, proprietary systems. Modern military vehicles, ships, and aircraft are often complex assemblages of mission-specific subsystems, each with its own unique interfaces, software, and support infrastructure. This "stove-piped" approach results in several critical limitations:

- **High Integration Costs and Timelines:** Integrating new sensors, weapons, or communication systems into existing platforms often requires significant, custom engineering efforts, leading to exorbitant costs and protracted timelines. A simple upgrade can necessitate a complete re-certification process for the entire system.
- **Vendor Lock-in and Limited Competition:** Reliance on a single vendor for proprietary components creates dependencies, stifles competition, and reduces the purchasing power of defence organizations. This often results in higher procurement costs and slower access to innovation.

- **Rapid Obsolescence:** The pace of commercial technology development far outstrips the traditional military procurement cycle. Proprietary systems struggle to keep pace, leading to components becoming obsolete long before the platform reaches the end of its service life, necessitating expensive re-engineering or sustainment of outdated technology.
- **Interoperability Challenges:** Lack of common standards impedes seamless data exchange and coordination between different platforms, services, and allied nations, undermining joint operations and coalition warfare capabilities.
- **Cybersecurity Vulnerabilities:** Complex, monolithic systems with opaque interfaces can present larger attack surfaces and make it harder to identify and patch vulnerabilities quickly.

The increasing complexity of modern warfare, characterized by multi-domain operations, hybrid threats, and the rapid proliferation of advanced technologies, exacerbates these challenges. Defence forces require systems that are not only powerful but also adaptable, upgradeable, and resilient. This urgent need has driven a global shift towards OSA, with major defence initiatives such as the US Department of Defense's (DoD) Modular Open Systems Approach (MOSA) policy explicitly mandating its adoption across all new program starts. This global momentum underscores the recognition that open systems are no longer a desirable feature but an operational imperative.

### 3. Generic Vehicle Architecture (GVA): A Foundation for Agility

Generic Vehicle Architecture (GVA) represents a pivotal step in applying Open Systems Architecture principles to the land domain. Originating in the UK with DEF STAN 23-09, GVA provides a standardized framework that defines the interfaces and communications protocols for electronic and electrical systems within military vehicles. It moves beyond merely standardizing connectors to establishing a holistic, platform-agnostic architecture.

#### 3.1 What is GVA?

GVA is not a specific piece of hardware or a particular software suite; rather, it is a *standard* that specifies how various subsystems within a vehicle should interact. As the Luminact GVA White Paper (2017) highlights, GVA defines a common electronic and electrical architecture, focusing on the interfaces required to enable true plug-and-play functionality. Key elements of GVA include:

- **Standardised Interfaces:** GVA mandates common physical and logical interfaces for power, data, and video, allowing components from different manufacturers to connect seamlessly. This is crucial for achieving true modularity.
- **Modularisation:** The architecture encourages the design of subsystems as independent modules, each performing a specific function. These modules can be easily added, removed, or upgraded without affecting other parts of the system.
- **Data Bus:** A high-bandwidth, Ethernet-based data backbone (often utilizing protocols like DDS for real-time data distribution) is central to GVA, facilitating robust and efficient communication between all connected modules.
- **Power and Data Distribution:** GVA standardizes how power is supplied and data is distributed throughout the vehicle, creating a unified infrastructure that simplifies integration.
- **Human Machine Interface (HMI):** It includes provisions for standardized displays, controls, and software interfaces, aiming to reduce crew training burdens and improve cognitive load. The Luminact paper notes that GVA "aims to reduce crew workload and training by standardising the HMI across different platforms and system variants."



GVA's focus on these core tenets ensures that new technologies can be rapidly integrated, obsolete components can be replaced with minimal disruption, and the vehicle's capabilities can evolve dynamically over its lifecycle. Examples of GVA adoption include key UK programs such as the Ajax (formerly SCOUT SV), Warrior Capability Sustainment Programme (CSP), and Challenger 2 Life Extension Project (LEP), demonstrating its practical application in complex platforms.

### 3.2 Benefits of GVA

The adoption of GVA delivers a cascade of benefits that address the critical challenges faced by modern defence forces:

- **Rapid Technology Insertion (TI):** GVA's modularity and standardized interfaces dramatically reduce the time and cost associated with integrating new technologies. Instead of extensive redesigns, new sensors, effectors, or C4ISTAR (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition, and Reconnaissance) systems can be "plugged in" and quickly brought online. This capability is paramount for maintaining a technological edge.
- **Reduced Obsolescence Risk:** By enabling the independent upgrade of components, GVA mitigates the risk of an entire platform becoming obsolete due to the unavailability of a single proprietary part. COTS hardware can be leveraged more effectively, ensuring access to the latest commercial innovations and sustaining systems for longer. The Luminact GVA White Paper (2017) states that GVA "reduces the risk of obsolescence by allowing components to be replaced with minimal impact on other systems."
- **Significant Cost Savings:** The efficiencies gained from reduced integration efforts, increased competition among suppliers, and extended platform service life translate into substantial cost reductions across the entire lifecycle – from procurement to sustainment. The Luminact paper cites that "studies have indicated potential savings of 30-50% in integration costs."
- **Enhanced Interoperability:** A common architectural standard fosters seamless data exchange not only within a platform but also across different vehicle types, services, and even allied nations (e.g., within NATO). This improves situational awareness, coordination, and overall mission effectiveness.
- **Streamlined Training and Logistics:** Standardized HMIs and common components across platforms simplify training for operators and maintainers, reducing skill fade and increasing operational readiness. Furthermore, a common parts catalogue can simplify logistics and reduce inventory requirements.
- **Improved Safety and Resilience:** By segmenting systems and standardizing communication, GVA can contribute to more robust and fault-tolerant designs, improving overall platform safety and resilience against failures or cyber threats.

*"Ross Newman, CEO at Astute Systems notes that 'Generic Vehicle Architecture is not just an upgrade; it's a foundational shift that enables defence forces to move from bespoke, stove-piped systems to an agile, modular ecosystem capable of rapid adaptation and sustained technological superiority.'"*

## 4. Strategic Advantages in Modern Conflicts

The geopolitical landscape is increasingly volatile, characterized by the resurgence of peer and near-peer competition and the proliferation of disruptive technologies. In this environment, the strategic advantages conferred by GVA and Open Systems Architecture are not merely beneficial; they are critical for national security.

### 4.1 Lessons from Ukraine

The ongoing conflict in Ukraine has provided stark lessons on the importance of adaptability, rapid technological integration, and resilient command and control. Both sides have demonstrated an ability to rapidly integrate novel technologies, often leveraging commercial solutions, to gain tactical advantages.

- **Rapid Adaptation:** Ukrainian forces have shown remarkable agility in integrating diverse, often commercial, technologies – from off-the-shelf drones for reconnaissance and targeting to satellite internet services like Starlink for resilient communications, and bespoke software solutions for battle management. This ad-hoc, agile integration, while born of necessity, highlights the strategic value of a system that can quickly absorb and operationalize new capabilities.
- **Decentralized Innovation:** The conflict has underscored the power of decentralized innovation and the ability to rapidly iterate on solutions. Proprietary systems, with their rigid update cycles, would struggle to keep pace with such dynamic requirements.
- **Resilience through Redundancy and Diversity:** The ability to swap out or integrate alternative systems in response to electronic warfare or physical destruction has been crucial. Open architectures naturally foster this diversity and redundancy.

While Ukraine's approach has often been reactive and improvised, a professional military equipped with GVA-enabled platforms could achieve similar levels of agility in a structured, deliberate, and secure manner. GVA would allow for the pre-planned integration of new sensors, jammers, or communication modules as threats evolve, without the need for emergency, costly overhauls. This proactive adaptability is a direct strategic advantage.

#### 4.2 Preparing for Peer/Near-Peer Competition (e.g., China)

The rise of technologically advanced adversaries, particularly China, presents a long-term strategic challenge. China's rapid advancements in areas like AI, quantum computing, hypersonic weapons, and cyber capabilities demand that Western defence forces maintain a decisive technological edge and, crucially, the ability to innovate and adapt faster than their rivals.

- **Maintaining Technological Superiority:** Proprietary systems inherently slow down the innovation cycle. GVA, by fostering competition and enabling easy technology insertion, ensures that defence platforms can continuously integrate the latest advancements, preventing technological stagnation and maintaining overmatch. This is vital in a technological arms race.
- **Countering Adversary's Speed of Development:** Adversaries are investing heavily in advanced manufacturing and rapid prototyping. To counter this, Western militaries must accelerate their own development and deployment cycles. GVA directly supports this by dramatically shortening the time from concept to operational capability for new components.
- **Resilience in a Contested Environment:** Future conflicts are likely to involve sophisticated electronic warfare and cyber attacks. Open, modular architectures can be inherently more resilient, allowing for quicker patching of vulnerabilities, easier replacement of compromised modules, and the integration of new defensive measures at speed.

*"According to Ross Newman, CEO at Astute Systems, 'In an era defined by rapid technological shifts and unpredictable conflicts, the ability to quickly integrate new capabilities and adapt existing platforms, as demonstrated in Ukraine, is paramount. Open systems architectures like GVA provide the strategic agility required to maintain a decisive edge against near-peer adversaries.'"*

By embracing GVA, defence forces can ensure their platforms remain relevant, capable, and adaptable throughout their extended service lives, providing a crucial strategic advantage in the face of evolving global threats.

## 5. Extending GVA to the Naval Domain

While Generic Vehicle Architecture was initially conceived for land platforms, its underlying principles of modularity, standardized interfaces, and open data exchange are universally applicable and hold immense potential for revolutionizing naval platform design and management. The challenges faced by naval forces – prolonged acquisition cycles, high through-life costs, and the constant need to integrate new sensors, weapons, and communication systems – mirror those in the land domain.

### 5.1 Applicability of GVA Principles

The core tenets of GVA translate directly to the complex environment of naval vessels:

- **Standardized Interfaces for Mission Systems:** Just as GVA standardizes interfaces for vehicle subsystems, its principles can be applied to naval mission systems (e.g., radar, sonar, electronic warfare, communications, navigation). This allows for "plug-and-play" integration of new or upgraded modules from various vendors.
- **Modular Combat System Architecture:** Modern naval combat systems are incredibly complex. Applying GVA principles enables the modularization of combat system components, allowing for independent upgrades of specific sensors, command and control modules, or weapon interfaces without affecting the entire system.
- **Platform Management Systems:** The intricate network of platform management systems (propulsion, power generation, auxiliaries, damage control) can also benefit from GVA-like standardization, improving data flow and easing the integration of new automation or monitoring technologies.
- **Data Bus Integration:** A high-bandwidth, resilient data bus (e.g., an Ethernet backbone leveraging DDS) is as critical for a warship as it is for a land vehicle. It provides the nervous system for all interconnected systems, enabling real-time data exchange across the vessel.

Challenges specific to the maritime environment, such as limited space, stringent power requirements, and harsh environmental factors (corrosion, vibration), would need careful consideration in the naval adaptation of GVA. However, these are engineering challenges that can be addressed within an open architecture framework, rather than fundamental barriers to adoption.

### 5.2 Benefits for Naval Platforms

Applying GVA principles to the naval domain offers a multitude of benefits:

- **Enhanced Mission Flexibility and Reconfigurability:** Naval platforms could be more easily reconfigured for different missions by swapping out modular mission packages. For example, a patrol vessel could rapidly switch between anti-submarine warfare, mine countermeasures, or humanitarian aid roles by integrating specific sensor and effector modules.
- **Reduced Integration Costs and Timelines:** The integration of new sensors, weapons, or communication systems, traditionally a costly and time-consuming process for warships, would be significantly streamlined. This accelerates the deployment of critical capabilities.
- **Mitigation of Obsolescence and Extended Service Life:** Naval platforms often have service lives spanning decades. GVA principles enable continuous, incremental upgrades of individual subsystems, preventing the entire vessel from becoming technologically obsolete and extending its operational utility.
- **Improved Through-Life Support:** Standardized components and interfaces simplify maintenance, logistics, and supply chain management across the fleet, reducing the total cost of ownership.

- **Greater Interoperability Across Fleets and Allies:** A standardized architecture facilitates seamless data exchange and operational coordination between different classes of ships, submarines, and even other services, enhancing joint and coalition operations.
- **Leveraging Commercial Innovation:** Naval platforms could more readily integrate COTS technologies, such as advanced computing hardware, displays, and networking components, benefiting from commercial economies of scale and rapid innovation cycles.

By embracing the spirit of GVA, navies can move towards a future where their vessels are not static, monolithic platforms, but dynamic, adaptable assets capable of evolving with the threat landscape and technological advancements.

## 6. The Power of a Unified Data Bus: UCM and Battle Management

At the heart of any effective Open Systems Architecture, including GVA, lies a robust and unified data distribution mechanism. The Data Distribution Service (DDS) standard has emerged as a critical enabler for real-time, high-performance data exchange, transforming how military platforms operate and providing the foundation for advanced capabilities like Usage and Condition Monitoring (UCM) and sophisticated Battle Management.

### 6.1 Data Distribution Service (DDS) as the Backbone

DDS is an open international standard (IEEE 1516, OMG DDS) for real-time, publish-subscribe data communication. Unlike traditional client-server or message queueing systems, DDS is specifically designed for mission-critical applications requiring high throughput, low latency, and deterministic performance. Its key characteristics make it ideal for complex military systems:

- **Real-time Performance:** DDS ensures data delivery with predictable latency, crucial for time-sensitive applications like weapon systems or flight controls.
- **Publish-Subscribe Model:** Components (publishers) broadcast data without needing to know specific recipients, while other components (subscribers) receive data they are interested in. This decouples applications, enhancing modularity.
- **Quality of Service (QoS) Policies:** DDS allows fine-grained control over data delivery, including reliability, persistence, liveliness, and resource limits, ensuring data integrity and availability even in challenging network conditions.
- **Scalability:** It can handle hundreds or thousands of data streams and nodes, making it suitable for large, distributed systems within a single platform or across a networked fleet.
- **Interoperability:** As an open standard, DDS promotes interoperability between different vendor implementations, aligning perfectly with OSA principles.

By leveraging an Ethernet-based network with DDS, a single, unified data bus can connect all subsystems within a GVA-enabled platform, from sensors and effectors to navigation, power management, and HMI.

### 6.2 Usage and Condition Monitoring (UCM)

Integrated via a DDS data bus, Usage and Condition Monitoring (UCM) transforms maintenance from a reactive to a proactive discipline. UCM involves continuously collecting and analyzing data from various platform subsystems to assess their health, predict potential failures, and optimize maintenance schedules.



- **Predictive Maintenance:** Real-time data from engines, transmissions, hydraulics, sensors, and other critical components can be streamed over the DDS bus. Advanced analytics can then detect anomalies and predict component failure before it occurs, allowing for scheduled maintenance rather than costly, unscheduled repairs.
- **Reduced Downtime and Optimized Logistics:** By predicting failures, UCM minimizes unexpected breakdowns, significantly increasing platform availability. It also allows for more efficient spare parts management, reducing inventory costs and ensuring the right parts are available when needed.
- **Enhanced Safety:** Continuous monitoring of critical systems provides early warnings of potential safety issues, allowing operators to take preventative action, thereby enhancing crew safety and reducing the risk of catastrophic failures.
- **Optimized Performance:** UCM data can also be used to understand how systems are performing under various operational loads, informing design improvements and optimizing operational procedures.

### 6.3 Battle Management (BM)

A unified DDS data bus is equally transformative for Battle Management, providing the nervous system for real-time situational awareness, decision-making, and coordinated action across the battlespace.

- **Enhanced Situational Awareness:** DDS enables the seamless fusion of data from all onboard sensors (radar, optical, acoustic, electronic warfare) with external data feeds (other platforms, intelligence networks). This creates a comprehensive, real-time common operating picture for commanders and operators.
- **Faster Decision-Making:** With real-time, reliable data flowing across the bus, commanders have immediate access to critical information, enabling quicker and more informed decision-making cycles – a decisive advantage in fast-paced engagements.
- **Improved Coordination and Effector Management:** The unified data bus allows for rapid communication between C2 systems and effectors (weapons, countermeasures). This facilitates dynamic targeting, synchronized engagements, and efficient allocation of resources across multiple threats. For instance, target data from a sensor can be immediately published to a weapon system, which can then publish its engagement status back to the C2 system, all in real-time.
- **Reduced Latency and Bandwidth Optimization:** DDS's efficient data distribution model minimizes network latency and optimizes bandwidth usage, crucial in environments where communication resources may be limited or contested.

*"As Ross Newman, CEO at Astute Systems observes, 'A unified DDS data bus transforms a collection of disparate systems into a cohesive, intelligent network. It's the nervous system that enables everything from predictive maintenance via Usage and Condition Monitoring to real-time, data-driven battle management, fundamentally enhancing both operational readiness and combat effectiveness.'"*

The integration of UCM and Battle Management on a single, unified DDS data bus within a GVA-enabled platform creates an intelligent, self-aware, and highly responsive system. This synergy not only optimizes maintenance and logistics but also fundamentally enhances the platform's operational capabilities and its ability to contribute effectively to complex, multi-domain operations.

## 7. Recommendations for Implementation

To fully capitalize on the strategic advantages offered by Generic Vehicle Architecture and Open Systems Architecture, defence organizations should consider the following recommendations:

- **Mandate Open Standards:** Follow the lead of leading defence nations (e.g., US DoD's MOSA) by mandating the use of GVA (DEF STAN 23-09) and other relevant open standards (e.g., DDS, FACET™, SOSA™ aligned efforts) for all new platform acquisitions and major upgrades. This creates a level playing field for industry and ensures future flexibility.
- **Develop a Phased Adoption Strategy:** Recognize that transitioning from legacy systems to a fully open architecture is a long-term endeavor. Implement a phased approach that prioritizes new acquisitions and high-value upgrades, while developing strategies for incrementally integrating open components into existing fleets.
- **Invest in Training and Skill Development:** Building and sustaining open systems requires a new set of skills within the defence workforce and industry. Invest in training programs for engineers, architects, and procurement specialists on open standards, modular design, and data bus technologies like DDS.
- **Foster Industry Collaboration and Competition:** Actively encourage a diverse ecosystem of suppliers, from large primes to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Leverage open standards to foster competition, drive innovation, and reduce reliance on single vendors. Astute Systems, with its expertise in defence and enterprise solutions, is ideally positioned to partner in this transformation.
- **Prioritize Data Standards and Cybersecurity:** From the outset, establish robust data governance frameworks and cybersecurity measures that are integral to the open architecture. Standardized data models are crucial for interoperability, and a modular approach can enhance cybersecurity by isolating components and simplifying vulnerability management.
- **Leverage Commercial Off-The-Shelf (COTS) Technology:** Actively seek opportunities to integrate COTS hardware and software components where appropriate. GVA facilitates this by providing the standardized interfaces necessary for commercial products to be integrated securely and effectively.
- **Conduct Pilot Programs and Demonstrators:** Initiate targeted pilot programs or technology demonstrators to prove the benefits of GVA and OSA in specific operational contexts, building confidence and gathering lessons learned before wider implementation.

## 8. Conclusion & Key Takeaways

The modern battlespace is characterized by rapid technological change, complex threats, and an unrelenting demand for agility and cost-effectiveness. The traditional paradigm of proprietary, stove-piped military systems is no longer fit for purpose, creating significant challenges in terms of cost, obsolescence, and the ability to adapt to evolving threats.

Generic Vehicle Architecture (GVA), underpinned by the principles of Open Systems Architecture, offers a transformative solution. By standardizing interfaces, promoting modularity, and leveraging robust data distribution mechanisms like DDS, GVA enables defence forces to:

- **Achieve unprecedented agility** through rapid technology insertion and reduced upgrade cycles.
- **Significantly reduce through-life costs** by mitigating obsolescence, fostering competition, and streamlining maintenance.
- **Gain a decisive strategic advantage** in conflicts by enabling faster adaptation and innovation than adversaries, as evidenced by lessons from Ukraine and the imperative for preparing for peer-level competition.

- **Extend these benefits to the naval domain**, revolutionizing ship and submarine system integration for enhanced mission flexibility and longevity.
- **Unlock advanced capabilities** like predictive Usage and Condition Monitoring and sophisticated Battle Management through a unified DDS data bus, leading to superior operational readiness and combat effectiveness.

Astute Systems firmly believes that the widespread adoption of GVA and OSA is not merely an engineering preference but a strategic imperative for any nation seeking to maintain a technological edge and ensure the operational relevance of its defence platforms in the coming decades. By embracing these architectural principles, defence organizations can move beyond the limitations of the past, building future-proof, adaptable, and highly capable forces ready to meet the challenges of an increasingly complex world.



## Get In Touch

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