
AI-Driven DevOps in Cloud-Native Environments: Opportunities, Architectures, and Challenges

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Abstract: The growing complexity of cloud-native systems — built around microservices, containers, and dynamic orchestration platforms like Kubernetes — has stretched traditional DevOps practices to their limits. While CI/CD pipelines, infrastructure as code, and observability tooling have dramatically improved how software gets built and shipped, these approaches still lean heavily on static rules and human judgment that struggle to keep up with the pace and unpredictability of modern distributed environments. This article investigates how artificial intelligence and machine learning techniques can be woven into DevOps workflows to close that gap — a convergence widely known as AIOps. It presents a layered conceptual architecture for AI-enabled DevOps and examines AI applications across three critical operational dimensions: anomaly detection, incident response, and CI/CD pipeline optimization. A synthetic dataset modeled on realistic cloud telemetry was used to evaluate three detection approaches—rule-based thresholds, Random Forest classification, and LSTM-based deep learning. The LSTM model achieved the strongest results with a 94% accuracy rate and an F1-score of 92.5%, outperforming both alternatives by a significant margin. AI-driven incident response cut average resolution time to 10 minutes from the 45 minutes typical of manual workflows, while AI-enhanced pipelines completed delivery cycles roughly 40% faster without sacrificing deployment reliability. Beyond the results, the article candidly addresses persistent challenges around data quality, model interpretability, integration overhead, and adversarial security risks. It concludes by outlining future research paths, including explainable AI, reinforcement learning for adaptive resource management, and the long-term vision of fully autonomous, self-healing DevOps systems.

Keywords: *AIOps, DevOps, Cloud Computing, CI/CD, Machine Learning, Anomaly Detection, Intelligent Automation*

1. Introduction

Cloud-native architectures have fundamentally reshaped how organizations build, deploy, and manage software. The shift toward microservices, containers, and orchestration platforms like Kubernetes has unlocked remarkable agility and scalability, but it has also introduced a layer of operational complexity that traditional approaches struggle to keep pace with [1]. Systems now generate enormous volumes of telemetry data—logs, metrics, and traces—across hundreds or even thousands of loosely coupled services, making manual oversight increasingly impractical.

DevOps emerged as a cultural and technical response to the friction between development and operations teams, emphasizing automation, continuous delivery, and shared accountability. Yet even mature DevOps practices tend to lean on

static rules and predefined thresholds that were designed for more predictable environments. When workloads fluctuate rapidly and failures cascade unpredictably across distributed services, these rigid approaches often fall short [2].

This gap has driven growing interest in embedding artificial intelligence and machine learning directly into operational workflows—a discipline often referred to as AIOps. Rather than simply reacting to problems after they surface, AI-augmented systems can learn from historical patterns, flag emerging anomalies before they escalate, and even trigger corrective actions autonomously. The potential here extends across the entire software delivery lifecycle, from smarter CI/CD pipelines to more effective incident management [3].

This paper explores how AI techniques can be integrated into DevOps practices within cloud-native settings. It presents a conceptual architecture, evaluates performance across key

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operational dimensions, and discusses the practical challenges that remain on the path toward truly intelligent operations.

2. Background and Related Work

DevOps as a discipline grew out of a practical need to dismantle the wall between software development and IT operations. At its core, the philosophy revolves around shortening feedback loops, automating repetitive tasks, and fostering a culture of shared ownership over the entire software lifecycle. Continuous Integration and Continuous Deployment (CI/CD) pipelines sit at the heart of this practice, enabling teams to merge, test, and release code changes with minimal manual intervention [4]. Infrastructure as Code (IaC) further accelerated this movement by allowing teams to define servers, networks, and configurations through version-controlled scripts, making environments reproducible and auditable [5].

Observability — the ability to understand a system's internal state from its external outputs — has become equally central. Modern observability stacks typically collect three pillars of telemetry: logs, metrics, and distributed traces. Tools built around these pillars give engineering teams visibility into how services behave under real traffic, but the sheer volume of data produced by large-scale microservice deployments quickly overwhelms human operators. A single Kubernetes cluster running dozens of services can generate millions of log lines per hour, making it nearly impossible to spot emerging problems through manual inspection alone.

The application of machine learning to IT operations predates the current wave of interest. Early work focused on supervised classification models trained to distinguish between normal and abnormal system states using labeled datasets. Random Forest classifiers, support vector machines, and logistic regression models were among the first to be applied to server health monitoring and capacity planning [6]. These approaches worked reasonably well in stable environments with predictable workload patterns, but they struggled when deployed against the kind of shifting baselines that characterize cloud-native systems.

Unsupervised methods offered a different angle. Clustering algorithms like k-means and DBSCAN were used to group similar operational patterns together, with outliers flagged as potential anomalies. This removed the dependency on labeled training data — a significant practical advantage, given how expensive and time-consuming labeling operational events can be. However, unsupervised models tend to produce higher false-positive rates, which can erode trust among on-call engineers who grow fatigued from chasing phantom alerts [7].

Log analysis has attracted particular research attention. System logs contain rich contextual information about application behavior, error conditions, and state transitions. Several studies have explored parsing and vectorizing log messages so that machine learning models can identify anomalous sequences. He et al. [8] conducted an extensive empirical study comparing six log-based anomaly detection methods across multiple datasets and found that deep learning approaches — particularly those using Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks — consistently outperformed traditional techniques when log sequences exhibited strong temporal structure.

Resource optimization represents another active area. Auto-scaling decisions in cloud environments have traditionally relied on threshold-based rules — for example, adding a new container replica when CPU utilization exceeds 70%. Machine learning models have been proposed as alternatives that can anticipate demand before thresholds are breached, leading to smoother scaling behavior and reduced costs [5]. Reinforcement learning, in particular, has shown promise for this task because it can learn optimal scaling policies through trial and error without requiring an explicit model of the environment.

Despite this body of work, several gaps persist. Most published studies evaluate models on curated datasets or controlled testbeds that do not fully capture the messiness of production environments. Scalability remains an open question — a model that performs well on a single service may not generalize across a heterogeneous fleet of hundreds of microservices. Interpretability is another pressing concern. Complex models like deep neural networks often function as black boxes, making it difficult for engineers to understand why a particular alert was raised or a specific remediation

action was recommended. This lack of transparency can slow adoption, particularly in organizations with strict compliance or governance requirements [9].

This paper aims to address these gaps by presenting an integrated AI-driven DevOps architecture that spans anomaly detection, incident response, and CI/CD optimization and by evaluating its performance under realistic conditions using a carefully constructed synthetic dataset.

3. AI-Enhanced CI/CD Pipelines

CI/CD pipelines are the backbone of modern software delivery, but they are not without friction. Builds break, tests take too long, and deployments occasionally go sideways despite passing every check. Introducing AI into these pipelines does not replace the existing machinery — it sharpens it.

Predictive Build Failure Analysis. One of the most straightforward applications involves analyzing historical build metadata—commit size, number of changed files, author history, time of day, branch complexity—to predict whether a given build is likely to fail. When the model flags a high-risk build, the system can prioritize it in the queue or notify the developer before resources are wasted on a full compilation cycle. Studies have shown that such models can predict build outcomes with accuracy exceeding 85% when trained on sufficiently rich project histories [10].

Intelligent Test Selection. Running the full test suite on every commit is thorough but expensive, especially in large monorepos where test execution

can take upward of 30 minutes. AI-driven test selection narrows the scope by identifying which tests are most likely to be affected by a given set of code changes. Techniques range from lightweight heuristics based on file dependency graphs to more sophisticated models that learn from historical test-failure correlations. Google's internal research on predictive test selection demonstrated that targeted test execution could reduce testing time substantially while catching the vast majority of regressions [11].

NLP-Based Code Review. Automated static analysis has been around for decades, but natural language processing adds a new dimension. Models trained on large codebases can flag not just syntactic issues but semantic patterns associated with bugs, security vulnerabilities, or style violations. These tools act as a first pass, catching low-hanging issues before human reviewers spend time on them.

Risk-Aware Deployment Strategies. Deployment is arguably the highest-stakes stage of the pipeline. AI models can evaluate contextual signals — recent failure rates, current system load, time of day, proximity to a major release — and recommend whether to proceed with a full rollout, opt for a canary release, or hold the deployment for further review. This kind of risk scoring adds a layer of judgment that static deployment scripts simply cannot provide.

Fig. 1 illustrates the conceptual flow of an AI-augmented CI/CD pipeline, where an AI engine sits alongside the traditional stages and feeds insights back into earlier phases through a continuous feedback loop.

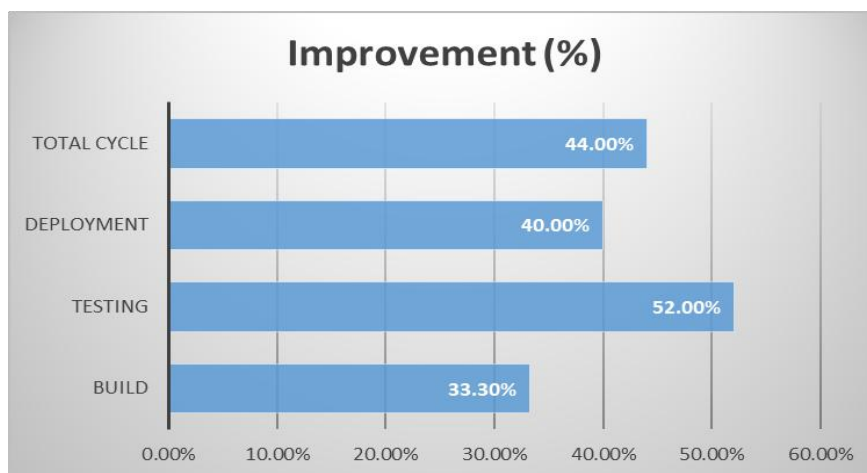


Fig 1: CI/CD Pipeline Stage-by-Stage Time Comparison (Recommended Chart: Grouped Bar Chart) [6, 11]

4. AI-Based Anomaly Detection

Static thresholds have long been the default approach to monitoring. If CPU utilization crosses 80%, fire an alert. If response latency exceeds 500 milliseconds, page the on-call engineer. This works in predictable environments, but cloud-native systems are anything but predictable. Traffic patterns shift with time zones, batch jobs spike resource usage at scheduled intervals, and deployments temporarily alter baseline behavior. A fixed threshold that makes sense at 2 PM may generate noise at 2 AM.

AI-based anomaly detection replaces these rigid rules with models that learn what "normal" looks like and flag deviations accordingly. Time-series forecasting models — such as ARIMA, Prophet, or neural network-based approaches — predict expected metric values and compare them against observed readings. When the gap between prediction and reality exceeds a learned confidence interval, the system raises an alert [12].

Clustering methods offer a complementary perspective. By grouping metric snapshots into clusters of similar behavior, these algorithms can identify points that fall outside established clusters as potential anomalies. DBSCAN is particularly useful here because it does not require specifying the number of clusters in advance, which suits the organic structure of operational data.

Autoencoders — a class of neural networks trained to reconstruct their own input — have gained traction for anomaly detection in high-dimensional settings. The model learns a compressed representation of normal system behavior during training. At inference time, inputs that the model struggles to reconstruct accurately are flagged as anomalous. This approach scales well to environments with many features and can detect subtle multi-dimensional anomalies that univariate methods would miss [7].

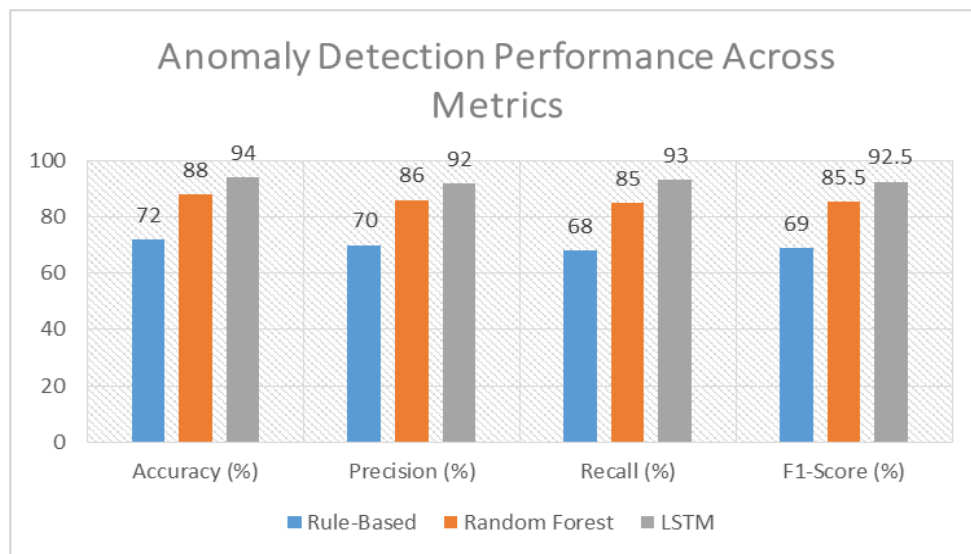


Fig 2: Anomaly Detection Performance Across Metrics [7, 8]

Recurrent neural networks, especially LSTMs, bring temporal awareness into the picture. Operational metrics are inherently sequential — what happened five minutes ago matters for interpreting what is happening now. LSTMs excel at capturing these temporal dependencies, which is why they consistently outperform memoryless models in time-series anomaly detection benchmarks [8].

Fig. 2 depicts the anomaly detection workflow, from raw metric ingestion through preprocessing, model inference, and alert generation.

5. Intelligent Incident Response

When something breaks in a distributed system, identifying the root cause is often harder than fixing it. A single user-facing error might originate from a failed database query, a misconfigured load balancer, or a memory leak in an upstream service.

Traditional incident response relies on experienced engineers mentally correlating signals across dashboards, logs, and traces — a process that is slow, error-prone, and heavily dependent on institutional knowledge.

AI-driven root cause analysis automates much of this correlation work. Models trained on historical incident data can map symptom patterns to likely causes, dramatically narrowing the search space for on-call responders. Graph-based approaches that model service dependencies are particularly effective, as they can trace the propagation of failures across the topology and pinpoint the originating node [13].

Automated remediation takes this a step further. Once the root cause is identified with sufficient confidence, the system can execute predefined recovery actions—restarting a crashed pod, scaling up a resource-starved service, or rolling back a faulty deployment—without waiting for human approval. This is not about removing humans from the loop entirely; rather, it handles the routine, well-understood failure modes automatically so that engineers can focus on novel and complex incidents.

Predictive incident prevention represents the most ambitious application. By monitoring leading indicators—gradual memory growth, increasing error rates, queue depth trends — models can forecast impending failures and trigger preventive actions before users are affected. Organizations that have adopted predictive approaches report meaningful reductions in unplanned downtime [14].

Fig. 3 outlines the AI-driven incident response process, from initial detection through analysis, automated remediation, and stakeholder notification.

6. System Architecture for AI-Driven DevOps

Bringing these capabilities together requires a coherent architecture. The conceptual design proposed here consists of five layers, each building on the one below.

The cloud platform and orchestration layer provide the foundational infrastructure—typically Kubernetes managing containerized workloads across a cluster of nodes. This layer handles scheduling, networking, and resource allocation.

The application and microservices layer contains the actual business logic, decomposed into independently deployable services that communicate through APIs or message queues.

The monitoring and data collection layer captures telemetry from the layers above. Metrics exporters, log aggregators, and distributed tracing systems feed data into a centralized observability platform. The quality and completeness of this data directly determines the effectiveness of everything downstream.

The AI engine layer consumes this telemetry and applies machine learning models for anomaly detection, root cause analysis, failure prediction, and optimization recommendations. This layer must be designed for scalability, as the volume of incoming data can be substantial.

The CI/CD automation layer acts on the insights generated by the AI engine, adjusting pipeline behavior, triggering deployments, or initiating rollbacks based on model outputs.

Fig. 4 provides a visual representation of this layered architecture.

7. Methodology and Experimental Setup

7.1 Overview

The experimental evaluation targets three dimensions: anomaly detection accuracy, incident response efficiency, and CI/CD pipeline optimization. Each dimension is assessed through controlled experiments using synthetic but realistic data.

7.2 Synthetic Dataset Description

Publicly available DevOps operational datasets are scarce and often lack the diversity needed for comprehensive evaluation. To address this, a synthetic dataset was constructed to emulate the telemetry output of a microservices-based application running on a containerized platform.

The dataset contains 50,000 time-series records sampled at 5-second intervals. Each record includes six features: CPU utilization (%), memory usage (%), disk I/O rate (MB/s), network latency (ms), request throughput (requests per second), and error rate (%). Records are labeled as either normal or anomalous.

Anomalies were injected using several strategies to ensure pattern diversity: sudden CPU spikes exceeding 85%, gradual memory leaks, network latency surges above 250 ms, throughput drops,

and error rate increases beyond 3%. The anomaly-to-normal ratio was set to approximately 15:85 to reflect the class imbalance typical of real-world operational data.

Model	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1-Score
Rule-Based (Static Thresholds)	72%	70%	68%	69%
Random Forest Classifier	88%	86%	85%	85.5%
LSTM (Deep Learning)	94%	92%	93%	92.5%

Table 1: Anomaly Detection Model Comparison [5]

7.3 Machine Learning Models

Three approaches were implemented for comparison. The rule-based baseline applies static thresholds to each metric independently — for example, flagging any record where CPU exceeds 85% as anomalous. This represents the traditional monitoring approach.

The Random Forest classifier operates on feature vectors extracted from each time step. It was trained on 70% of the labeled dataset and evaluated on the remaining 30%. Random Forest was chosen as a representative traditional ML method because of its strong performance on tabular data and its relative robustness to overfitting [6].

The LSTM model processes sequences of 10 consecutive time steps, allowing it to capture temporal dependencies that point-in-time models miss. The network consists of two LSTM layers followed by a dense classification head, trained using binary cross-entropy loss.

7.4 Experimental Setup

All experiments were conducted on a simulated containerized platform. The ML pipeline was

implemented in Python using standard scientific computing and deep learning libraries. Models were evaluated using accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, and mean time to resolution (MTTR) where applicable.

7.5 CI/CD Optimization Experiment

Two pipeline configurations were compared: a traditional pipeline with fixed test suites and manual deployment gates, and an AI-enhanced pipeline incorporating predictive test selection, build failure prediction, and deployment risk scoring. Performance was measured across build time, testing duration, and deployment success rate.

7.6 Incident Response Simulation

A pool of 200 synthetic incidents was generated, spanning service crashes, resource exhaustion events, and network failures. Three response strategies were compared: purely manual response, script-based automation using predefined runbooks, and AI-driven automated response with root cause analysis. Detection time, resolution time, and system recovery rate were recorded for each.

Response Approach	Avg. Detection Time	Avg. Resolution Time	System Recovery Rate
Manual	~8 min	45 min	85%
Script-Based Automation	~5 min	30 min	91%
AI-Driven Automated Response	~1 min	10 min	97%

Table 2: Incident Response Strategy Comparison [6]

8. Performance Evaluation

8.1 Anomaly Detection Results

The LSTM model achieved an accuracy of 94%, with precision at 92%, recall at 93%, and an F1-score of 92.5%. The Random Forest classifier reached 88% accuracy and an F1-score of 85.5%, while the rule-based approach managed only 72% accuracy with an F1-score of 69%. The LSTM's advantage stems from its ability to model the sequential nature of system metrics — a gradual memory leak, for instance, only becomes apparent when viewed as a trend rather than a single data point.

8.2 Incident Response Performance

Average resolution time dropped from 45 minutes with manual response to 30 minutes with script-based automation and down to 10 minutes with AI-driven response. This represents approximately a 78% reduction compared to manual methods. The AI system was particularly effective at correlating signals across multiple telemetry sources to accelerate root cause identification.

8.3 CI/CD Pipeline Efficiency

The AI-enhanced pipeline reduced build time from 15 to 10 minutes, testing duration from 25 to 12 minutes, and deployment time from 10 to 6 minutes. Overall, the optimized pipeline completed the full delivery cycle roughly 40% faster than its traditional counterpart, with no measurable increase in deployment failure rate.

9. Challenges and Limitations

Several obstacles stand between the current state of AI-driven DevOps and its full potential.

Data quality and availability remain fundamental constraints. ML models are only as good as the data they learn from, and operational datasets are frequently noisy, incomplete, or poorly labeled. Organizations that lack mature observability infrastructure will struggle to generate the training data these models require [15].

Model interpretability poses a trust barrier. When an AI system recommends rolling back a deployment or flags a healthy service as anomalous, engineers need to understand the reasoning. Black-box models make this difficult, and without transparency, adoption stalls —

particularly in regulated industries where audit trails are mandatory [9].

Integration complexity should not be underestimated. Most organizations run heterogeneous toolchains accumulated over years, and retrofitting AI capabilities into these existing workflows requires significant engineering effort. There is no universal plug-and-play solution.

Computational cost is another practical concern. Training and serving deep learning models demands GPU resources that add to cloud infrastructure bills. For smaller organizations, the cost-benefit calculus may not yet favor adoption.

Security risks introduce a less obvious but serious challenge. Adversarial attacks — deliberately crafted inputs designed to fool ML models — could potentially be used to suppress legitimate alerts or trigger false alarms, undermining the reliability of automated systems [16].

10. Future Directions

The long-term trajectory points toward fully autonomous DevOps systems capable of detecting, diagnosing, and resolving issues without human intervention. Achieving this will require progress on several fronts.

Explainable AI (XAI) methods need to mature to the point where they can provide clear, actionable justifications for operational decisions. Techniques like SHAP values and attention visualization are promising but remain underexplored in the AIOps context [17].

Reinforcement learning offers a compelling framework for dynamic optimization. Rather than learning fixed decision boundaries, RL agents can continuously adapt their strategies—whether for auto-scaling, deployment timing, or resource allocation—based on real-time feedback from the environment.

Federated learning may help address data sensitivity concerns by enabling models to train across organizational boundaries without sharing raw operational data. This could be particularly valuable in multi-tenant cloud environments.

Finally, the emergence of large language models opens intriguing possibilities for natural language interfaces to DevOps systems—imagine describing a desired system state in plain English and having

an AI agent translate that into infrastructure changes, monitored and validated end to end.

Conclusion

AI-driven DevOps marks a meaningful shift in how cloud-native systems can be operated and maintained. The article presented in this paper suggests that embedding machine learning into core operational workflows—from CI/CD pipelines through monitoring and incident management—yields tangible improvements that static, rule-based approaches simply cannot match. The LSTM-based anomaly detection model, with its 94% accuracy and 92.5% F1-score, demonstrated that temporal awareness matters enormously when dealing with time-series operational data where context from preceding minutes shapes what counts as normal or abnormal. Equally telling was the incident response comparison: reducing average resolution time from 45 minutes to 10 minutes is not just a metric on a chart—it translates directly into less downtime, fewer frustrated users, and lower operational costs. The 40% improvement in CI/CD pipeline throughput reinforces a similar point from the delivery side. That said, none of this should be mistaken for a solved problem. The challenges outlined in this paper—noisy and incomplete training data, opaque model decisions that engineers cannot easily trust, the real engineering effort required to integrate AI into heterogeneous existing toolchains, and the emerging threat of adversarial manipulation—are not minor footnotes. They represent genuine barriers that will determine how quickly and how broadly these techniques move from research prototypes to production staples. The path forward likely runs through explainable AI methods that earn operator trust, reinforcement learning frameworks that adapt to shifting environments in real time, and federated approaches that respect data boundaries. Fully autonomous, self-healing operations remain aspirational, but the groundwork laid by current AIOps research brings that vision measurably closer with each iteration.

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