An Integrated Nine-Switch Power Conditioner for Power Quality Enhancement and Voltage Sag Mitigation

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Abstract: The nine-switch converter has already been proven to have certain advantages, in addition to its component saving topological feature A nine-switch power converter having two sets of output terminals was recently proposed in place of the traditional back-to-back power converter that uses 12 switches in total. Instead of accepting these tradeoffs as limitations, a nine-switch power conditioner is proposed here that virtually "converts" most of these topological short comings into interesting performance advantages. Despite these advantages, the nine-switch converter has so far found limited applications due to its many perceived performance tradeoffs like requiring an oversized dc-link capacitor, limited amplitude sharing and constrained phase shift between its two sets of output terminals. With an appropriately designed control scheme then incorporated, the nine-switch converter is shown to favorably raise the overall power quality in experiment, hence justifying its role as a power conditioner at a reduced semiconductor cost. Aiming further to reduce its switching losses, an appropriate discontinuous modulation scheme is proposed and studied here in detail to doubly ensure that maximal reduction of commutations is achieved.

Key words: Discontinuous nine switch converter % Pulse-width modulation(pwm) % Power conditioner % power quality

INTRODUCTION

First introduction, nine switch power converter development has grown rapidly with many converter topologies now readily found in the open literature.

Almost always, these two converters are connected in a back-to-back configuration using 12 switches in total and sharing a common dc-link capacitor, as reflected by the configuration. Accompanying this development is the equally rapid identification of application areas, where power converters can contribute positively toward raising the overall system quality. In most cases, the identified applications would require the power converters to be connected in series or shunt, depending on the operating scenarios under consideration. In addition, they need tobe programmed with voltage, current and/or power regulation schemes so that they can smoothly compensate for harmonics, reactive power flow, unbalance and voltage variations. For even more stringent regulation of supply quality, both a shunt and a series

converter are added with one of them tasked to perform voltage regulation, while the other performs current regulation [1].

Where available, a microsource can also be inserted to the common dc link, if the intention is to provide for distributed generation in a microgrid, without significantly impacting on the long proven proper functioning of the back-to-back configuration. Even though facing no major operating concerns at present, improvements through topological modification or replacement of the back-to-back configuration to reduce its losses, component count and complexity would still be favored, if there is no or only slight expected tradeoff in performance [2]. A classical alternative that can immediately be brought out for consideration is the direct or indirect matrix converter, where 18 switches are used in total. That represents six switches more than the back-to-back configuration, but has the advantage of removing the intermediate electrolytic capacitor for compactness and lifespan extension. If the heavy switch

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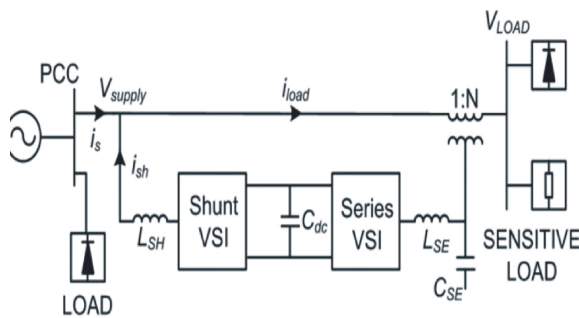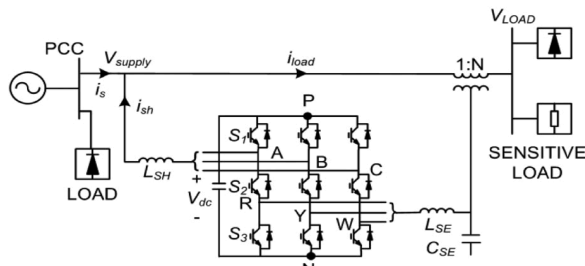
Fig. 1: Back to back power converter

Fig. 2: Nine switch power converter

count is still of concern, those indirect sparse matrix converters proposed can be considered, where the minimum switch count attainable is nine, but at the expense of supporting only unidirectional power flow. Neither storage capacitor nor dc microsource is again needed, which thus renders the normal and sparse matrix converters as not the preferred choice, if ride-through is a requirement. Matrix converters are also not preferred, if voltage buck and boost operations are both needed for a specified direction of power flow [3].

Yet another reduced semiconductor topology can be found, where the B4 converter is introduced for dc–ac or ac–dc energy conversion. The B4 converter uses four switches to form two phase legs with its third phase drawn from the midpoint of a split dc capacitive link. For tying two ac systems together, two B4 converters are needed with their split dc link shared. The total number of switches needed is thus 8, which probably is the minimum achievable for interfacing two ac systems. The resulting ac–dc–ac converter should then be more rightfully referred to as the B8 converter [4]. The B8 converter is, however, known to suffer from large dc-link voltage variation, unless both systems are of the same frequency and synchronized so that no fundamental current flows through the dc link. That certainly is a constraint, in addition to the lower ac voltage that can be produced by each B4 converter from its given dc-link voltage.

Overcoming some limitations of the B8 converter is the fiveleg converter introduced, which conceptually can be viewed as adding a fifth phase leg to the B8 converter. The added phase leg is shared by the two interfaced ac systems with now no large fundamental voltage variation observed across its dc link. The only constraint here is the imposition of common frequency operation on the two interfaced ac systems, which then makes it unsuitable for applications like utility powered adjustable speed drives and series-shunt power conditioners. Presenting a better reduced semiconductor alternative for high quality series–shunt compensation, this paper proposes a single stage integrated nine-switch power conditioner, whose circuit connection is shown in Fig. 2. As its name roughly inferred, the proposed conditioner uses a nine-switch converter with two sets of output terminals, instead of the usual 12 switch back-toback converter [5].

The nine-switch converter was earlier proposed at about the same time and was recommended for dual motor drives rectifier–inverter systems and uninterruptible power supplies. Despite functioning as intended, these applications are burdened by the limited phase shift and strict amplitude sharing enforced between the two terminal sets of the nine-switch converter. More importantly, a much larger dc-link capacitance and voltage need to be maintained, in order to produce the same ac voltage amplitudes as for the back-to-back converter. Needless to say, the larger dc-link voltage would overstress the semiconductor switches unnecessarily and might to some extent overshadow the saving of three semiconductor switches made possible by the nine-switch topology. The attractiveness of the nine-switch converter, if indeed any, is therefore not yet fully brought out by those existing applications discussed. Although follow-up topological extensions can subsequently be found where a Z-source network and alternative modulation schemes are introduced, they did not fully address those critical limitations faced by the nine-switch converter and not its traditional back-to-back counterpart [6].

Investigating further by taking a closer view at those existing applications described earlier, a general note observed is that they commonly use the nine-switch converter to replace two shunt converters connected back-to-back. Such replacement will limit the full functionalities of the nine-switch converter, as explained in Section II. In the same section, an alternative concept is discussed, where the nine-switch converter is chosen

to replace a shunt and a series converter found in an integrated power conditioner, instead of two shunt converters. Underlying operating principles are discussed comprehensively to demonstrate how such "series–shunt" replacement can bring forth the full advantages of the nine-switch converter, while yet avoiding those limitations faced by existing applications. Details explaining smooth transitions between normal and sag operating modes are also provided to clarify that the more restricted nine-switch converter will not under perform the more independent back-toback converter even for sag mitigation [7].

Section III then proceeds to compare the ratings and losses of the back-to-back and nine-switch conditioners, before an appropriate modulation scheme is evaluated in Section IV for reducing the nine-switch converter commutation count and hence its switching losses. Also presented in Section IV is two sets of higher level control schemes with the first used for controlling one set of three-phase outputs so as to compensate for harmonic currents, reactive power flow and three-phase unbalance caused by nonlinear loads. The grid currents drawn from the utility are then sinusoidal, having only fundamental component.

In synchronism,the second set of outputs is controlled to compensate for any detected grid voltage harmonics. During voltage sags, the second set of control schemes also has the ability to continuously keep the load voltages within tolerable range. This sag mitigation ability, together with other conceptual findings discussed in this paper but not in the open literature, has already been verified in experiment with favorable results observed [8].

System Description and Operating Principles of a Nine-switch Power Conditioner
Back-to-Back Converter Limitations and Recommendation: Fig. 1 shows the per-phase representation of the common back-to-back unified power quality conditioner (UPQC),where a shunt converter is connected in parallel at the point of common-coupling (PCC) and a series converter is connected in series with the distribution feeder through an isolation transformer. The shunt converter is usually controlled to compensate for load harmonics, reactive power flow and unbalance, so that a sinusoidal fundamental current is always drawn from the utility grid, regardless of the extent of load nonlinearity. Complementing, the series converter is controlled to block grid harmonics, so that a set of three-phase fundamental voltages always appears across the load terminals. Rather than the described, the inverse assignment of functionalities with the shunt converter regulating voltage and series converter regulating current is alsopossible, as demonstrated. Being so flexible, the UPQC is indeed an excellent "isolator," capable of promptly blocking disturbances from propagating throughout the system.

Despite its popularity, the back-to-back UPQC is nonetheless still complex and quite underutilized, even though it offers independent control of two decoupled converters. Its underutilization ismainly attributed to the series converter, whose output voltages are usually small, since only small amount of grid harmonics need to be compensated by it under normal steady-state conditions, especially for strong grid. Some typical numbers for illustration can be found where it is stated that the converter modulation ratio can be as low as 0.05×1.15 with triplen offset included, if the converter is sized to inject a series voltage of 1.15 p.u. during sag occurrence. Such a low modulation ratio gives rise to computational problems, which fortunately have already been addressed, but not its topological underutilization aspect. Resolving the topological aspect is, however, not so easy, especially for cases where the dc-link voltage must be shared and no new component can be added. Tradeoffs would certainly surface, meaning that the more reachable goal is to aim for an appreciable reduction in component count, while yet not compromising the overall utilization level by too much.Offering one possible solution then, this paper presents an integrated power conditioner, implemented using the nine-switch converter documented, rather than the traditional back-to-back converter. Before the nine-switch converter can be inserted though, its impact should be thoroughly investigated to verify that there would not be any overburdening of system implementation cost and performance. This recommendation is advised as important, since earlier usages of the nine-switch converter for motor drives and rectifier–inverter systems have so far resulted in some serious limitations, which would be brought up for discussion shortly to highlight certain insightful concepts [9].

Nine-Switch Converter Operating Principles and Existing Constraints: As illustrated in Fig.2, the nine-switch converter is formed by tying three semiconductor switches per phase, giving a total of nine for all three phases. The nine switches are powered by a common dc link, which can either be a microsource or a capacitor depending on the system requirements under

Table I: Switch States and Output Voltages per Phase

S_1	S_2	S_3	V_{AN}	V_{RN}
ON	ON	OFF	V_{dc}	V_{dc}
ON	OFF	ON	V_{dc}	0
OFF	ON	ON	0	0

consideration. Like most reduced component topologies, the nine-switch converter faces limitations imposed on its assumable switching states, unlike the fully decoupled back-to-back converter that uses 12 switches. Those allowable switching states can conveniently be found in Table I, from which, it is clear that the nine-switch converter can only connect its two output terminals per phase to either Vdc or 0V, or its upper terminal to the upper dc rail P and lower terminal to the lower dc rail N. The last combination of connecting its upper terminal to N and lower terminal to P is not realizable, hence constituting the first limitation faced by the nine-switch converter. That limitation is nonetheless not practically detrimental and can be resolved by coordinating the two modulating references per phase, so that the reference for the upper terminal is always placed above that of the lower terminal, as per the two diagrams drawn inFig. 3. Imposing this basic rule of thumb on reference placement then results in those gating signals drawn in Fig. 3 for the three switches of $S1$, $S2$ and $S3$ per phase [10].

Details of Comparative: A qualitative justification for using the nine-switch converter as a UPQC or other series–shunt conditioners. This justification is now reinforced here by some numerical values calculated for determining the semiconductor losses and component ratings of the back-to-back and nine switch power conditioners. For the latter, it is further divided into three sub categories without modifying the context of

series–shunt power conditioning. The following now describes each of the four cases in detail, before summarizing their features.

Back-To-Back UPQC: Back-to-back UPQC allows independent control of its shunt and series converters and hence does not need to divide its carrier band into two, like in Fig. 3. That means *h*2 is zero, if the nominal RMS grid voltage is chosen as the base. Voltage ratings of the dc-link capacitor, series and shunt switches would thus have to be higher than this value, after adding some safety margin current rating of the series switches also has to be higher than $(1 + k)$ p.u., after adding some safety margin and treating the nominal sinusoidal RMS load current as the base. The term k then represents the amount of load current "polluted" by low order harmonic and reactive components, whose negation –k represents the current flowing through the shunt switches, while performing load current compensation.

Rating of the shunt switches must however be larger than k p.u., so as to allow the shunt converter to channel enough energy to the series converter for onward transferring to the load during period of sag compensation, as would also be shown later through experimental testing. For that, the raised shunt value can be set equal to the series value of $(1 + k)$ p.u. for uniformity or any other higher value that is deemed appropriate. Using these identified values, the overall losses of the back-to-back conditioner are determined using the same simulation approach and parameters for the 600 V/50A insulated gate bipolar transistor (IGBT). Other IGBT parameters can certainly be used, but by using the same parameters, a firm foundation for result verification is formed without compromising generality. Results obtained are subsequently tabulated in Table II for later comparison purposes.
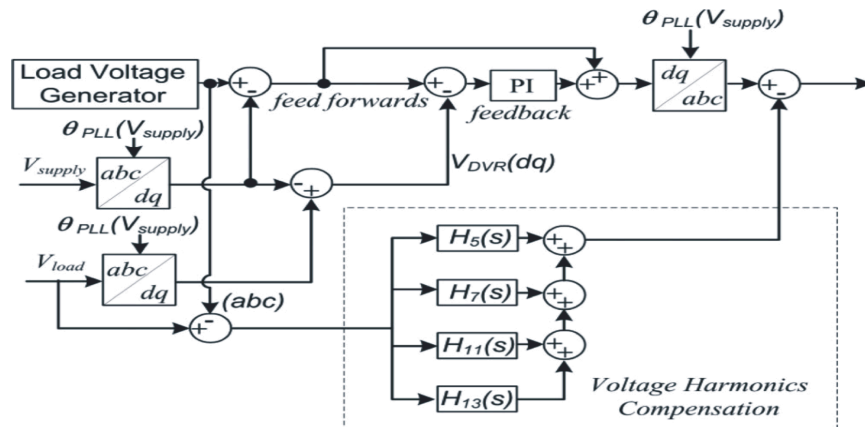

Fig. 3: Series control block diagram

Proposed System in Nine-Switch UPQC: The proposed nine-switch UPQC operates with its carrier band divided into $h1$ and $h2$. The latter, being much narrower, is for blocking small grid harmonic voltages from propagating to the load, which from the example described, that is only about 5% of the full carrier band. The minimum dc-link voltage and hence voltage ratings of components, must then be chosen based on $Vdc\text{-}NS = 1.05\ Vdc\text{-}BB$, where subscript NS is used to represent "nine-switch." Current rating wise, analysis of the nine-switch UPQC is slightly different, because of its merging of functionalities to gain a reduction of three switches.

Focusing first at the upper $S1$ switch, maximum current flowing through it would be the sum of shunt ($-k$) and series ($1 + k$) currents per phase when $S1$ and $S2$ are turned ON and hence giving a final value of 1 p.u. Being slightly higher, the common maximum current flowing through $S2$ and $S3$ is $(1 + k)$ p.u., which flows when $S1$ and $S2$ are turned ON for the former and $S1$ and $S3$ are turned ON for the latter. Note, however that these maximum currents are only for sizing the switches and should not be exclusively used for computing losses.

The reason would be clear after considering $S1$ as an example, where it is noted that the maximum current of 1 p.u. does not always flow. In fact, when $S1$ and $S3$ are turned ON, the current flowing through $S1$ is smaller at $-k$ p.u., whose duration depends on a number of operating parameters like modulation ratio, phase displacement and others. Analytical computation of losses is therefore nontrivial, whose simulation approach is now practiced here for computing the UPQC losses. Obtained results for both normal and sag operating modes are subsequently summarized for easier referencing.

Frequency Control with Nine-Switch UPQC: Nine-switch UPQC, constrained to operate with the same common frequency (CF) at its shunt and series terminals is not able to compensate for harmonic grid voltages. Parameter $h2$ is therefore redundant, it can be set to zero, whose effect is a minimum dc-link voltage that is no different from that of the back-to-back UPQC.

The series transformer, being no longer used, can also be bypassed to avoid unnecessary leakage voltage drop and to divert the large load current away from the UPQC, leaving the three switches per phase to condition only the $-k$ shunt current. Among the switches, the lowest $S3$ switch behaves differently in the sense that it is always turned ON and therefore produces only conduction losses.

It will only start to commutate when a sag occurs and the transformer exists its bypassed state. When that happens, the load current again flows through the switches, inferring that their current rating must still be chosen above $(1 + k)$ p.u., as reflected together with some calculated loss values.

Division of Carrier Band: Although not encouraged, the nine-switch UPQC can also be implemented with its carrier band divided into two equal halves, like the different frequency mode studied previously. The maximum modulation ratio per reference is then 0.5×1.15, whose accompanied effect is the doubling of dc-link voltage and switch voltage rating without affecting their corresponding current rating. Such doubling is of course undesirable, which fortunately can be resolved for UPQC and other series–shunt applications, by simply dividing the carrier band appropriately with $h1$ being much wider than $h2$, instead of making them equal. Results for the latter, although not recommended.

Comparative Findings: It is clear that the higher voltage requirement of the nine-switch UPQC can be as much as doubled, if not implemented correctly. This doubling can fortunately be reduced by narrowing the half, labeled as $h2$, to only 5%of the full carrier band. Another observation noted is the slightly lower losses of the nine-switch UPQC, as compared to its back-to-back precedence, when both schemes have their series compensation activated. The same lower losses are also observed with voltage sag mitigation, but not with equal carrier division. The latter in fact causes losses to more than doubled, because of the doubled dc-link voltage and higher rated IGBT used for implementation.

The same calculation can again be performed with no series compensation included. For the nine-switch UPQC, it just means the CF mode discussed with $h2$ set to zero and the transformer bypassed. The former leads to a smaller dc-link voltage, while the latter causes losses to be smaller, since large load current now does not flow through the nine-switch UPQC. For comparison, values calculated for the back-to-back UPQC operating without series compensation are also included, which clearly show it having slightly lower losses under normal operating condition. The lower losses here are attributed to the back-to-back UPQC using only six modulated switches for shunt compensation, while the nine-switch UPQC uses six upper modulated switches ($S1$ and $S2$ per phase) and three lower conducting switches ($S3$). This finding would

reverse when sag occurs, during which the back-to-back UPQC uses 12 modulated switches, while the nine- switch UPQC uses only nine and hence producing lower losses.

Upon verifying its appropriateness, suitable modulation and control schemes are now presented for controlling the nine switch UPQC with reduced switching losses and roughly the same performance standards as its back-to-back counterpart. Relevant details for attaining these goals are presented shortly.

Principle of Modulation: Because of its independency, modulation of traditional back-to- back converter can be performed with its two sets of three phase references centrally placed within the vertical carrier span. Performance quality obtained would then be comparable to the optimal space vector modulation (SVM) scheme. Such central placement is, however, not realizable with the nine-switch power conditioner, whose references must be placed one above the other. Obtaining optimal waveform quality at both terminals of the nine-switch converter is, therefore, not possible, but is not a serious limitation, since modern semiconductor devices and power conversion techniques would have greatly diluted the spectral gains introduced anyway.

Controlling and Modeling: Being unrealizable and insignificant, the objective set for modulating the nine-switch converter should rightfully not be spectral gain, but rather a reduction in switching losses. With the latter objective in mind, the immediate modulation choices for consideration would likely be from those traditional discontinuous modulation schemes, like the popular 60°- and 30°-discontinuous schemes. Upon evaluation though, these schemes are found to be not suitable for the nine-switch converter, since they require both upper and lower dc-rail clamping per set of output terminals, technically cannot be met by the nine-switch converter. Instead, the nine-switch converter only allows upper dc-rail clamping for its upper terminals and lower dc-rail clamping for its lower terminals, which so far can only be met by the less commonly adopted 120°-discontinuous modulation scheme.

To formally demonstrate its suitability, relevant offset and modified reference expressions for the 120°-discontinuous modulation scheme are derived, before plotting them for illustration of one phase Using (2), the modulation plots obtained clearly show the upper reference tied to only the upper dc-rail and lower reference tied to only the lower dc-rail for a continuous duration of 120°- per fundamental cycle. No crossover of references
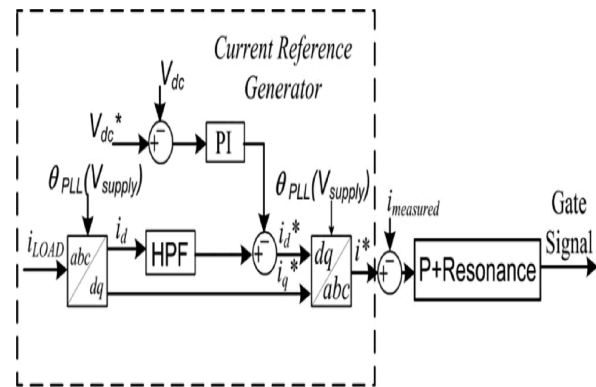

Fig. 4: Shunt control block diagram

is observed, implying that the basic modulation rule of thumb of the nine-switch converter is not breached and the 120°-discontinuous scheme is indeed a suitable scheme for reducing its commutation count by 33%. Lower commutation count would then lead to lower switching losses, whose values depend on the current amplitudes and phases at the two terminals per phase, like all other converters modulated discontinuously.

Before proceeding on higher level control, it is fair to comment here that a similar modulation scheme can be found, whose derivation is oriented more toward the space vector approach. Surely, the space vector domain can be insightful, but it also needlessly complicates the modulation process and does not bring out the clamping patterns between the two references per phase as clearly as the carrier-based approach. The latter is therefore preferred and has independently been used by the authors to develop the 120°-discontinuous scheme, first presented.

Principles of Series Control: The series terminals of the nine-switch UPQC are given two control functions that can raise the quality of power supplied to the load under normal and sag operating conditions. For the former, the series terminals of the conditioner are tasked to compensate for any harmonic distortions that might have originated at the PCC. Where necessary, they should also help to regulate the load voltage to compensate for any slight fundamental voltage variation. This second functionality is, however, more relevant under voltage sag condition, where a sizable series voltage needs to be injected to keep the load voltage nearly constant. The overall control block representation realized is shown in Fig. 4, where the subsystem responsible for voltage harmonic compensation is distinctly identified within the rectangular enclosure.

As seen, the harmonic compensation subsystem is realized by including multiple resonant regulators in the stationary frame singling out those prominent low-order load voltage harmonics it is certainly verified that the regulators introduce multiple high gain resonant peaks only at those chosen harmonic frequencies, with gains at the other frequencies close to zero. Selective harmonic compensation is therefore realizable and has the advantage of reducing the burden shouldered by the power conditioner, given also that not all harmonics in the load voltage error need to be eliminated in the first place. Another advantage gained by realizing the regulators in the stationary frame is linked to the internal model concept, which hints that a single resonant regulator tuned at a certain frequency can process both positive- and negative-sequence components located at that frequency. In contrast, if realized in the synchronous frame, two control paths per harmonic would generally be needed for processing positive- and negative-sequence components separately.

Depending on the number of harmonics considered, such separate paths might end up overstressing the control circuit or microcontroller unnecessarily. To avoid these unwarranted complications, implementation in the stationary frame is therefore preferred and would in fact suit the carrier based modulation scheme presented.

Upon next detecting the occurrence of voltage sag, the series control focus should rightfully switch from harmonic compensation to fundamental voltage restoration. Spontaneously, the series modulating reference fed to the pulse-width modulator would change from a small harmonic wave pattern to one with fundamental frequency and much larger amplitude, determined solely by the extent voltage.

Principles of Shunt Control: As per previous power conditioners, the shunt terminals of the nine-switch power conditioner are programmed to compensate for downstream load current harmonics, reactive power and to balance its shared dc-link capacitive voltage. To realize these control objectives, an appropriate control scheme is drawn in F, where the measured load current is first fed through a high-pass filter in the synchronous frame. The filter blocks fundamental d-axis active component and passes forward the harmonics and q-axis reactive component for further processing.

In parallel, a PI regulator is also added to act on the dc-link voltage error, forcing it to zero by generating a small d-axis control reference for compensating losses and hence maintaining the dc-link voltage constant. The sum of outputs from the filter and PI regulator then forms the control reference for the measured shunt current to track. Upon tracked properly, the source current would be sinusoidal and the load harmonics and reactive power would be solely taken care of by the proposed power conditioner.

Experimental Verification: To validate its performance, a nine-switch power conditioner was implemented in the laboratory and controlled using a dSPACE DS1103 controller card. The dSPACE card was also used for the final acquisition of data from multiple channels simultaneously, while a 4-channel Lecoy digital scopewas simply used for the initial debugging and verification of the Dspace recorded data, but only four channels at a time. The final hardware setup is shown in Fig. 5, where parametric values used are also indicated. Other features noted from the figure include the shunt connection of the upper UPQC terminals to the supply side and the series
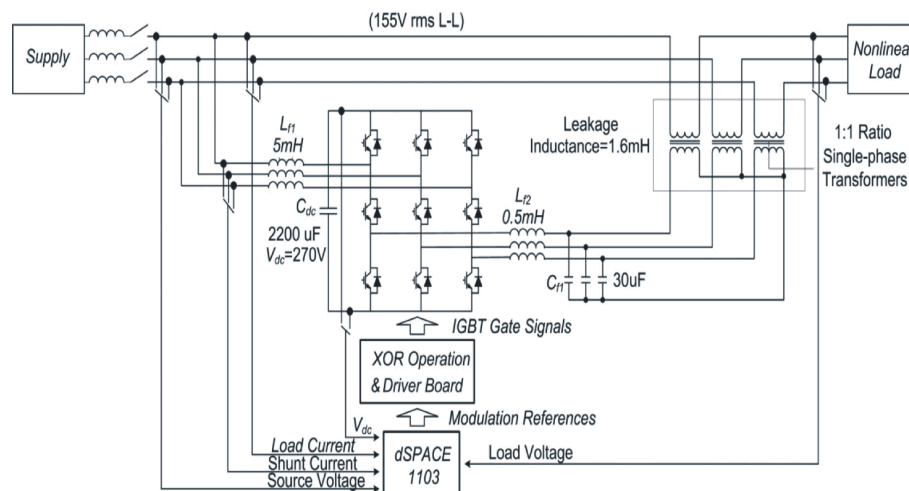

Fig. 5: Experimental setup and parameters

connection of the lower terminals to the load side through three single-phase transformers. Reversal of terminal connections for the setup, like upper6series and lower6shunt, was also affected, but was observed to produce no significant differences, as anticipated. For flexible testing purposes, the setup was also not directly connected to the grid, but was directed to a programmable ac source, whose purpose was to emulate a controllable grid, where harmonics and sags were conveniently added.

With such flexibility built-in, two distorted cases were programmed with the first having a lower total harmonic distortion (THD) of around 4.18%. This first case, being less severe, represents most modern grids, regulated by grid codes, better. The second case with a higher THD of around 11.43% was included mainly to show that the nine-switch UPQC can still function well in a heavily distorted grid, which might not be common in practice. Equipped with these two test cases, experiments were conducted with the shunt compensation scheme always activated, so as to produce the regulated dc-link voltage needed for overall UPQC operation. The series compensationscheme on the other hand, was first deactivated and then activated to produce the two sets of comparative load voltage. The data obviously show that the proposed nine-switch UPQC is effective in smoothing theload voltage, regardless of the extent of low order grid harmonic distortion introduced.

To strengthen this observation the supply, series injection and load voltages for the second test case with a higher grid THD and with both series and shunt compensation activated. The supply voltage is indeed distorted and would appear across the load if series compensation is deactivated and the transformer is bypassed. The distortion would, however, be largely blocked from propagating to the load, upon activating the series compensation scheme with the shunt compensation scheme still kept executing. Example load voltage waveform illustrating this effectiveness can be found at the bottom.

CONCLUSION

This paper evaluates shortcomings experienced by previous applications of the newly proposed nine-switch converter. With a better understanding developed, the conclusion drawn is that the nine-switch converter is not an attractive alternative for replacing back-to-back converter with two shunt bridges. Instead, the nine-switch converter is more suitable for replacing back-to-back converter in "series–shunt" systems, where one good example is the UPQC. As a further performance booster, a modified 120°-discontinuous modulation scheme is presented for reducing the overall commutation

count by 33%. Followed up next with proper shunt and series control, harmonics, reactive power and voltage sags are compensated promptly with no appreciable degradation in performance. The nine-switch conditioner is therefore proved to be effective, while yet using lesser semiconductor switches. Experimental results for confirming its anticipated smooth performance have already been obtained through intensive laboratory testing.

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