

Description

Title of Invention: DIRECT-TYPE AC POWER CONVERSION DEVICE

Technical Field

5 [0001] The present invention relates to a direct AC power converter, and particularly, to a configuration including a rectifying circuit, an inverter, and a boost chopper.

Background Art

[0002] Patent Documents 1 and 2 and Non-Patent Document 1 introduce direct AC power converters. In each of these direct AC power converters, a boost chopper is used
10 and receives an electric power from a rectifying circuit and supplies the electric power to an inverter so that pulsation of an instantaneous power is reduced.

Prior Art Documents

Patent Documents

[0003] Patent Document 1: Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open No. 2011-193678
15 Patent Document 2: Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open No. 2012-135184
Patent Document 3: Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open No. 2014-82926

Non-Patent Document

[0004] Non-Patent Document 1: Ohnuma, Itoh, "Experimental Verification of Single Phase to Three Phase Converter Using an Active Buffer circuit with a Charge Circuit",
20 IEEJ 2010 Industry Applications Society Conference 1-124, pp. I-587-590 (2010)

Summary of Invention

Problems to be Solved by the Invention

[0005] In the techniques introduced in Patent Documents 1 and 2 and Non-Patent Document 1, however, a period of charge from the rectifying circuit to the capacitor and a
25 period of discharge from the capacitor to the inverter are set alternately in each 1/4 of a

cycle of an input AC voltage. The magnitude of an output voltage thus remains at $1/\sqrt{2}$ times a crest value of the input AC voltage.

[0006] Also in the technique described in Patent Document 3, a capacitor is unnecessarily charged and discharged in view of the operation of an inverter, so that a boost chopper is likely to require an increased power capacity.

[0007] The present invention therefore has an object to provide a technique of reducing a power capacity required for a boost chopper while increasing a voltage output from a direct AC power converter more than in a conventional technique.

Means to Solve the Problems

[0008] A direct AC power converter according to the present invention includes a DC link (7), a first rectifying circuit (5, 51), a boost chopper (3), and a switch (41).

[0009] The DC link has a first power supply line (L1) and a second power supply line (L2) to which a potential lower than a potential of the first power supply line is applied.

[0010] The first rectifying circuit has a plurality of input terminals that receive an input of an AC voltage, and a pair of output terminals (51c, 51d) each connected to the DC link.

[0011] The inverter converts a voltage applied to the DC link into another multi-phase AC voltage.

[0012] The boost chopper has a capacitor (34) at its output stage.

[0013] The switch performs a discharge/non-discharge from the capacitor to the DC link.

[0014] In a first aspect of the direct AC power converter according to the present invention, in the boost chopper, the capacitor is charged at least during a first period being a part of a period during which a discharge duty (dc) is greater than 0.

[0015] The discharge duty is a time ratio at which the switch is conductive.

[0016] A virtual DC link voltage (Vdc) is greater than or equal to a first value (V1) and

smaller than or equal to a second value (V2). The virtual DC link voltage is expressed as a sum of a product ($d_c \cdot V_c$) of the discharge duty and a voltage between both ends (V_c) of the capacitor and a product ($d_r \cdot V_{rec}$) of a rectifying duty (d_r) and a rectified voltage (V_{rec}) of the AC voltage.

5 [0017] The rectifying duty takes a value obtained by subtracting a sum of the discharge duty and a zero voltage duty (d_z) from 1.

[0018] The zero voltage duty is a time ratio at which the inverter (6) adopts a zero voltage vector irrespective of magnitude of a voltage output from the inverter (6).

[0019] The first value is a maximum value ($\max(|V_{uvl}|, |V_{vwl}|, |V_{wul}|)$) among absolute
10 values of respective line-to-line voltages of the multi-phase AC voltage.

[0020] The second value is a maximum value that the absolute values can take.

[0021] In a second aspect of the direct AC power converter according to the present invention, in the first aspect, the capacitor is charged in the boost chopper during the first period and a part or whole of a period at which the discharge duty is 0.

15 [0022] In a third aspect of the direct AC power converter according to the present invention, in the first or second aspect, the capacitor (34) is charged and discharged with a charge power (P_{ci}) and a discharge power (P_{co}) during the first period. The first period has a period during which the charge power is greater than the discharge power and a period during which the discharge power is greater than the charge power.

20 [0023] In a fourth aspect of the direct AC power converter according to the present invention, in any one of the first to third aspects, a period during which the virtual DC link voltage (V_{dc}) takes the first value (V1) is present.

[0024] In a fifth aspect of the direct AC power converter according to the present invention, in any one of the first to fourth aspects, the discharge duty at which the zero
25 voltage duty (d_z) is minimum is set based on a command value (i_{rec}^*) of a rectified

current (i_{rec}) being a sum of a current (i_b) flowing in the boost chopper (3) and a current (i_{direct}) flowing from the first rectifying circuit to the inverter (6), a command value (V_{dc}^*) of the virtual DC link voltage (V_{dc}), a voltage between both ends (V_c) of the capacitor, the rectified voltage (V_{rec}), and a current (i_{dc}) input to the inverter (6).

5 [0025] In a sixth aspect of the direct AC power converter according to the present invention, in the fifth aspect, when the virtual DC link voltage (V_{dc}) is greater than the rectified voltage (V_{rec}) and the command value (i_{rec}^*) of the rectified current (i_{rec}) is greater than or equal to a product of a predetermined value (dr_max) and a current (i_{dc}) input to the inverter (6), the rectifying duty (dr) takes the predetermined value, and the
10 discharge duty (dc) takes a value obtained by subtracting the predetermined value from 1.

[0026] The predetermined value is a value $((V_{dc}^* - V_c)/(V_{rec} - V_c))$ obtained by dividing a value obtained by subtracting the voltage between both ends (V_c) of the capacitor from the command value (V_{dc}^*) of the virtual DC link voltage (V_{dc}) by a value obtained by subtracting the voltage between both ends (V_c) from the rectified voltage
15 (V_{rec}).

[0027] A seventh aspect of the direct AC power converter according to the present invention, in any one of the first to sixth aspects, further includes a second rectifying circuit (52) that inputs the rectified voltage (V_{rec}) to the boost chopper (3).

[0028] In an eighth aspect of the direct AC power converter according to the present
20 invention, in any one of the first to sixth aspects, the pair of output terminals of the first rectifying circuit are connected to an input side of the boost chopper.

[0029] In a ninth aspect of the direct AC power converter according to the present invention, in the first aspect or any one of the third to eighth aspects, the discharge duty (dc) is always positive.

25 [0030] A tenth aspect of the direct AC power converter according to the present

invention, in any one of the first to ninth aspects, further includes a diode in parallel with the switch (41). A forward direction of the diode is a direction in which the capacitor (34) is charged from the DC link (7).

Effects of the Invention

5 [0031] The capacitor is charged in the boost chopper at least during a part of the period in which the discharge duty is greater than 0, so that an average value of maximum values of voltages that can be output from the inverter in a cycle of control of switching of the inverter can exceed $1/\sqrt{2}$ times a crest value of the AC voltage.

[0032] A small discharge duty can be selected, and thus, the average value or the
10 effective value of the current flowing in the inductor of the boost chopper can be reduced more than in the conventional technique.

[0033] These and other objects, features, aspects and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent from the following detailed description of the present invention when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

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Brief Description of Drawings

[0034] [FIG. 1] A circuit diagram illustrating a configuration of a direct AC power converter according to an embodiment.

[FIG. 2] A circuit diagram illustrating another configuration of the direct AC
20 power converter according to the embodiment.

[FIG. 3] A circuit diagram of an equivalent circuit of the direct AC power converter according to the embodiment.

[FIG. 4] A block diagram illustrating a configuration of a controller of the direct AC power converter according to the embodiment.

25 [FIG. 5] A flowchart summarizing steps of obtaining a rectifying duty, a zero

voltage duty, a discharge duty, and a current command value.

[FIG. 6] A graph showing waveforms of specifications of Example 1.

[FIG. 7] A graph showing waveforms of specifications of Example 1.

[FIG. 8] A graph showing waveforms of specifications of Example 2.

5 [FIG. 9] A graph showing waveforms of specifications of Example 2.

[FIG. 10] A graph showing a relationship between a command value of a virtual DC link voltage and a command value of an inverter.

[FIG. 11] A graph showing a relationship between a command value of the virtual DC link voltage and a command value of the inverter.

10 [FIG. 12] A graph showing waveforms of specifications of Example 3.

[FIG. 13] A graph showing waveforms of specifications of Example 3.

[FIG. 14] A graph showing waveforms of currents flowing in inductors of Examples 2 and 3.

15 [FIG. 15] A graph showing waveforms of currents flowing through capacitors of Examples 2 and 3.

[FIG. 16] A graph showing an operation of an inverter of Example 2.

[FIG. 17] A graph showing an operation of an inverter of Example 3.

Description of Embodiments

20 [0035] FIG. 1 is a circuit diagram illustrating a configuration of a direct AC power converter according to an embodiment.

[0036] The direct AC power converter includes a DC link 7, rectifying circuits 51 and 52, a boost chopper 3, a switch 41, and an inverter 6.

[0037] The DC link 7 has power supply lines L1 and L2. A potential lower than the
25 potential of the power supply line L1 is applied to the power supply line L2.

[0038] The rectifying circuit 51 has input terminals 51a and 51b that receive an AC voltage V_{in} and a pair of output terminals 51c and 51d respectively connected to the power supply lines L1 and L2. The rectifying circuit 51 is of a full-wave rectification type. Illustrated herein is a case in which the rectifying circuit 51 is formed by a diode
 5 bridge.

[0039] FIG. 1 illustrates a state in which the AC voltage V_{in} is supplied to the rectifying circuit 51 from a single-phase AC power supply via a filter circuit 2. The filter circuit 2, however, is provided to cut off a harmonic noise, and thus, a cutoff frequency of the harmonic noise is higher than the frequency of the AC voltage V_{in} .
 10 The function of the filter circuit 2 has hardly any influence on the operations of the respective sections described below, and accordingly, description will be given below without consideration of the operation of the filter circuit 2.

[0040] An operation of the switch 41 and switching operations of the boost chopper 3 and the inverter 6 are controlled by a controller 9. The controller 9 can be regarded as
 15 being included in the direct AC power converter as well.

[0041] The inverter 6 converts the voltage applied to the DC link 7 into another multi-phase AC voltage. Illustrated herein is a configuration in which the inverter 6 outputs a three-phase AC voltage to a permanent-magnet synchronous motor PMSM that serves as an inductive load. The inverter 6 is a voltage-source inverter that operates
 20 under instantaneous spatial vector control, and may have a publicly known configuration. The inverter 6 outputs a three-phase current I_{inv} to the permanent-magnet synchronous motor PMSM.

[0042] The boost chopper 3 has a capacitor 34 at its output stage. More specifically, a rectified voltage V_{rec} of the AC voltage V_{in} is applied to the boost chopper 3. The
 25 rectified voltage is generated by the rectifying circuit 52 of full-wave rectification type.

Illustrated herein is a case in which the rectifying circuit 52 is formed by a diode bridge.

[0043] The boost chopper 3 has an inductor 32, a switch 31, and a diode 33 in addition to the capacitor 34. The rectified voltage V_{rec} is applied between one end of the inductor 32 and one end of the switch 31. The other end of the inductor 32, the other
5 end of the switch 31, and an anode of the diode 33 are connected to each other. The capacitor 34 is connected between a cathode of the diode 33 and the one end of the switch 31. For example, the switch 31 is an insulated gate bipolar transistor.

[0044] Such a configuration is publicly known as the boost chopper, and thus, detailed operation thereof will be omitted.

10 [0045] It is noted here that the switch 31 is conductive/non-conductive in accordance with activity/non-activity of a control signal S_b and that a boost duty db that is a time ratio at which the switch 31 is conductive is determined by a command value ib^* (described below) of a current ib flowing in the inductor 32, a capacitor voltage (voltage between both ends of the capacitor 34) V_c to be applied to the capacitor 34, and the
15 rectified voltage V_{rec} .

[0046] The switch 41 performs discharge/non-discharge from the capacitor 34 to the DC link 7 in accordance with activity/non-activity of a control signal S_c . More specifically, the switch 41 is connected between the power supply lines L1 and L2 in series with the capacitor 34.

20 [0047] Normally, the boost chopper 3 operates to make the voltage between both ends of a capacitor (hereinbelow referred to as a "capacitor voltage") V_c higher than the rectified voltage V_{rec} . The switch 41 thus has a switch device for controlling whether to flow a current from the boost chopper 3 (more specifically, from the capacitor 34) toward the power supply line L1. For example, such a switch device is an insulated gate bipolar
25 transistor.

[0048] A diode, a forward direction of which is the direction from the DC link 7 toward the boost chopper 3 (more specifically, from the power supply line L1 toward the capacitor 34), is desirably provided to charge the capacitor 34 with a regenerative current from the inverter 6.

5 [0049] The controller 9 receives an AC voltage V_{in} (more accurately, a signal indicating its waveform: the same applies to the following), a current I_{inv} output from the inverter 6, and a capacitor voltage V_c , and outputs control signals S_b , S_c , and S_g . The control signal S_g is a signal for controlling switching of the inverter 6. Since illustrated herein is a case in which the inverter 6 outputs a three-phase voltage, the control signal S_g
10 is composed of 6 ($= 3 \times 2$) signal groups.

[0050] FIG. 2 is a circuit diagram illustrating another configuration of the direct AC power converter according to the embodiment. In comparison with the configuration shown in FIG. 1, the rectifying circuit 51 also serves as the rectifying circuit 52. That is to say, the pair of output terminals 51c and 51d of the rectifying circuit 5 are connected to
15 an input side of the boost chopper 3. In this case, a rectified voltage V_{rec} is not always applied to the boost chopper 3, unlike the configuration shown in FIG. 1. This is because the other end of the inductor 32 is connected via the power supply line L1 to the switch 41, and depending on an operating status of the switch 41, the capacitor voltage V_c is applied to the boost chopper 3.

20 [0051] However, FIGs. 1 and 2 can be treated equivalently in an equivalent circuit described below, and thus, a control method described below is common. The equivalent circuit will be described first.

[0052] FIG. 3 is a circuit diagram of the equivalent circuit of each of the direct AC power converters shown in FIGs. 1 and 2. The rectified voltage V_{rec} is expressed as a
25 voltage source, and accordingly, a switch G_{rec} indicates whether the rectifying circuit 51

is conductive. The switches 31 and 41 are respectively indicated by switches Gb and Gc. However, the regenerative current from the inverter 6 is not taken into consideration, and the diode of the switch 41 is not taken into consideration.

[0053] The inverter 6 and its load are expressed as a current source for flowing a DC current i_{dc} into the inverter 6. With the switch Gz conductive, the inverter 6 operates with a so-called zero voltage vector. When the inverter 6 operates with the zero voltage vector, the inverter 6 short-circuits with respect to an inductive load with any one of the power supply lines L1 and L2, and thus does not receive a current from the DC link 7.

[0054] The inverter 6 is allowed to operate with any vectors other than the zero voltage vector when the inverter 6 receives a current from the DC link 7. The inverter 6 thus operates with any vectors other than the zero voltage vector when the switch Gz is not conductive.

[0055] When the capacitor voltage V_c higher than the rectified voltage V_{rec} is applied to the DC link 7, no current flows in the DC link 7 from the rectifying circuit 51. That is to say, the switch G_{rec} is not conductive when the switch G_c is conductive.

[0056] As described in Patent Documents 1 and 2 above, when time ratios at which the switches G_{rec} , G_c , and G_z are conductive are respectively a rectifying duty d_r , a discharge duty d_c , and a zero voltage duty d_z , a sum of the three time ratios is 1. That is to say, Expression (1) below holds, where these time ratios are time ratios in a cycle shorter than a cycle of the AC voltage V_{in} and are time ratios regarding a carrier cycle controlled with approximation that the AC voltage V_{in} is constant.

[0057] $d_r + d_c + d_z = 1 \dots (1)$

[0058] The zero voltage duty d_z is a time ratio corresponding to a period during which the inverter 6 adopts the zero voltage vector irrespective of the magnitude of a voltage to be output. The discharge duty d_c is a time ratio at which the switch 41 is conductive.

[0059] The rectifying duty d_r is a time ratio at which the rectifying circuit 51 is conductive. Expression (1) reveals that the rectifying duty d_r takes a value obtained by subtracting a sum of the discharge duty d_c and the zero voltage duty d_z from 1.

[0060] As the DC voltage applied to the DC link 7, the capacitor voltage V_c is adopted when the switch 41 is conductive and the rectified voltage V_{rec} is adopted when the switch 41 is not conductive. Here, a virtual voltage (referred to as a "virtual DC link voltage" in this application) V_{dc} is determined according to Expression (2) below.

$$[0061] \quad V_{dc} = d_r \cdot V_{rec} + d_c \cdot V_c \dots (2)$$

[0062] That is to say, the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} is expressed as a sum of a product ($d_c \cdot V_c$) of the discharge duty d_c and the capacitor voltage V_c and a product ($d_r \cdot V_{rec}$) of the rectifying duty d_r and the rectified voltage V_{rec} . This can also be understood as an average of maximum values of voltages that the inverter 6 is capable of output in a cycle of control of switching of the switch 41 and the inverter 6. FIG. 3 shows the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} as a voltage generated between both ends of the current source i_{dc} (this flows the DC current i_{dc}) representing the inverter 6 and its load.

[0063] The virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} is an average value of the maximum values of a voltage that the inverter 6 is capable of output as described above, and thus, the voltage output from the inverter 6 may fall below the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} . In such a case, the inverter 6 adopts the zero voltage vector even when the switch 41 is conductive.

This reflects a fact that as described above, the zero voltage duty d_z is a time ratio corresponding to a period during which the inverter 6 adopts the zero voltage vector irrespective of the magnitude of the voltage output from the inverter 6 but is not a time ratio corresponding to all the periods during which the inverter 6 adopts the zero voltage vector.

[0064] In such an equivalent circuit, a current i_{rec} from the voltage source indicating

the rectified voltage V_{rec} (referred to as a "rectified current" in this application) is understood as a sum of the current i_b flowing in the inductor 32 (of the boost chopper 3) and a current i_{direct} flowing from the rectifying circuit 51 into the inverter 6 in an actual configuration.

5 [0065] In the configuration shown in FIG. 1, the rectified current i_{rec} is not directly indicated. With reference to FIG. 1, the current i_{direct} is a current flowing from the rectifying circuit 51 into the DC link 7, and the current i_b is a current flowing from the rectifying circuit 52 into the boost chopper 3.

[0066] In the configuration shown in FIG. 2, the rectified current i_{rec} is output from
10 the output terminal 51c, and a portion thereof that flows into the inductor 32 is the current i_b .

[0067] Since the switch G_{rec} indicates the conductivity/non-conductivity of the rectifying circuit 51, the rectifying duty d_r that is a time ratio at which the rectifying circuit 51 is conductive is expressed as a value obtained by dividing the current i_{direct} by
15 the DC current i_{dc} . Thus, Expression (3) below holds.

$$[0068] \quad i_{rec} = d_r \cdot i_{dc} + i_b \dots (3)$$

[0069] In Patent Documents 1 and 2 and Non-Patent Document 1 above, a period during which the current i_b is allowed to flow is excluded from a period (providing period) during which the capacitor 34 provides electric power to the DC link 7.
20 Furthermore, the providing period and a period (receiving period) during which the capacitor 34 receives electric power from the DC link 7 are set alternately in each 1/4 of the cycle of the AC voltage V_{in} . For this reason, the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} does not exceed $1/\sqrt{2}$ times a crest value of the AC voltage.

[0070] However, the capacitor 34 is not always discharged and is conductive at the
25 discharge duty d_c even during the providing period. Therefore, even the providing

period includes a period during which the capacitor 34 can be charged. In contrast, the providing period is necessary in a period during which the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} is greater than the rectified voltage V_{rec} . This is because, even with $dc = 0$, as is clear from Expression (2), the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} can be determined only by the rectified voltage V_{rec} , the rectifying duty d_r , and the zero voltage duty d_z when the
 5 virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} is smaller than the rectified voltage V_{rec} .

[0071] In other words, at least during a part of the period during which the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} is greater than the rectified voltage V_{rec} ($dc > 0$ during this period: a reason for this will be described below), the capacitor 34 is charged in the boost chopper
 10 3 so that the capacitor 34 is supplemented with an electric power. As a result, the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} can exceed $1/\sqrt{2}$ times the crest value of the AC voltage V_{in} . Needless to say, the capacitor 34 can be charged during a part or whole of the period during which $dc = 0$.

[0072] Alternatively, the period during which the capacitor 34 is charged can be set to
 15 be longer than in a conventional technique even when the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} does not exceed $1/\sqrt{2}$ times the crest value of the AC voltage V_{in} , thus reducing an average value or an effective value of the current i_b flowing in the inductor 32 more than in a conventional technique.

[0073] More detailed description will be given below. The discharge duty dc is
 20 desirably set to be small in order to reduce a loss in the boost chopper 3 and a rated current required for the inductor 32.

[0074] Considered first is the case in which the rectified current i_{rec} is greater than the current i_{direct} . According to Expression (3), this is the case in which there is a margin for flowing the current i_b in the boost chopper 3, and the magnitude of the rectifying duty
 25 d_r is not limited by the rectified current i_{rec} . In this case, the case in which the virtual

DC link voltage V_{dc} is made to be smaller than or equal to the rectified voltage V_{rec} is considered as a first case. In the first case, $dc = 0$ and $dz > 0$ as described above. Specifically, setting is made such that $dc = 0$ in Expressions (1) and (2), so that the rectifying duty dr and the zero voltage duty dz in the first case are determined by Expression (4) below. At this time, the capacitor 34 is not discharged via the switch 41.

[0075] $dr = V_{dc}/V_{rec}, dz = 1 - V_{dc}/V_{rec} \dots (4)$

[0076] In other words, it is revealed that when a command value V_{dc}^* of the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} is set, the rectifying duty dr should be set to a ratio (V_{dc}^*/V_{rec}) of the command value V_{dc}^* to the rectified voltage V_{rec} , and the zero voltage duty dz should be set to a value obtained by subtracting the ratio from 1 in order to cause the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} to follow the command value V_{dc}^* with the discharge duty dc being zero in the first case.

[0077] It is also revealed that the zero voltage duty dz is minimum in this case. This is because, according to Expression (2), the zero voltage duty dz needs to be increased in order to match the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} with the command value V_{dc}^* even when the discharge duty dc increases.

[0078] In other words, in the first case, setting the rectifying duty dr to the ratio (V_{dc}^*/V_{rec}) can be regarded as setting a discharge duty dc for making the zero voltage duty dz minimum and setting a value of the discharge duty dc to 0.

[0079] When the control above is performed in the first case, the capacitor 34 is not discharged.

[0080] The case in which the rectified current i_{rec} is greater than the current i_{direct} and the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} is greater than the rectified voltage V_{rec} is considered as a second case. In this case, it is obvious from Expression (2) that the discharge from the capacitor 34 to the DC link 7 needs to be performed. That is to say, the discharge duty

dc is positive. It is also obvious from Expression (2) that the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} should be smaller than or equal to the capacitor voltage V_c .

[0081] A zero voltage duty d_z that does not contribute to a rise in the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} needs to be reduced in order to reduce the discharge duty d_c for reduced loss or rated current. In the second case, the magnitude of the rectifying duty d_r is not limited by the rectified current i_{rec} as in the first case, and thus, the DC current i_{dc} can be fed by the rectified current i_{rec} . The zero voltage duty d_z can therefore be reduced to zero.

[0082] According to the above and Expression (1), Expression (2) can be transformed into Expression (5) below.

$$\begin{aligned} [0083] \quad V_{dc} &= d_r \cdot V_{rec} + (1 - d_r) \cdot V_c \\ \therefore d_r &= (V_{dc} - V_c) / (V_{rec} - V_c) \dots (5) \end{aligned}$$

[0084] In other words, it is found that in order to cause the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} to follow the command value V_{dc}^* in the second case, the rectifying duty d_r should be set to a ratio $(V_{dc}^* - V_c) / (V_{rec} - V_c)$, and the discharge duty d_c should be set to a value obtained by subtracting the ratio from 1.

[0085] In the second case, setting the rectifying duty d_r as described above can be regarded as setting the discharge duty d_c to make the zero voltage duty d_z minimum and setting a value of the discharge duty d_c to $(1 - d_r)$. This is because the zero voltage duty d_z reduces to zero also in this case.

[0086] It can be regarded that the control of each duty means setting the discharge duty d_c for making the zero voltage duty d_z minimum based on two viewpoints. The first viewpoint is whether the rectified current i_{rec} is greater than the current i_{direct} , that is, whether the command value i_{rec}^* of the rectified current i_{rec} is set to be greater than the current i_{direct} . The second viewpoint is whether the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} is

greater than the rectified voltage V_{rec} , that is, whether the command value V_{dc}^* is greater than the rectified voltage V_{rec} .

[0087] The circuit shown in FIG. 1 can afford to flow the current i_b from the rectifying circuit 52, and the circuit shown in FIG. 2 can afford to flow the current i_b from the rectifying circuit 51. Therefore, when the DC current i_{dc} is estimated, the use of an estimated value $i_{dc}^{\wedge}$ thereof allows the command value i_b^* of the current i_b to be set according to Expression (6) below in consideration of Expression (3).

$$[0088] \quad i_b^* = i_{rec}^* - dr_{max} \cdot i_{dc}^{\wedge} \dots (6)$$

[0089] Herein, dr_{max} is a rectifying duty dr represented by Expression (4) in the first case and by Expression (5) in the second case.

[0090] In particular, when the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} is greater than the rectified voltage V_{rec} as in the second case, a providing period appears during which discharge is performed from the capacitor 34 to the DC link 7 at the discharge duty dc . During this providing period, the current i_b flows in accordance with the command value i_b^* represented by Expression (6), and thus, not only the discharge but also the charge of the capacitor 34 is performed.

[0091] In this application, therefore, the period corresponding to the second case is referred to as a "charge and discharge zone". In contrast, the period corresponding to the first case is referred to as a "charge zone" in this application because the capacitor 34 is not discharged but is only charged.

[0092] A known approach can be employed for a switching operation to be performed by a switch G_b (switch 31) using the current i_b flowing in the boost chopper 3 to charge the capacitor 34 to the capacitor voltage V_c . This approach may be of a so-called discontinuous current mode, a critical mode, or a continuous current mode.

[0093] The case in which the rectified current i_{rec} is smaller than or equal to the

current i_{direct} is then considered as a third case. This is the case in which there is no margin for flowing the current i_b with reference to Expression (3). Alternatively, this is the case in which $i_b^* < 0$ with reference to Expression (6), that is, the case in which Expression (7) below holds.

5 [0094] $i_{rec}^* < d_{r_max} \cdot i_{dc}^{\wedge} \dots (7)$

[0095] The current i_b does not actually take a negative value, and thus, the rectifying duty d_r that takes a value smaller than d_{r_max} is adopted under the condition of Expression (7) so that Expression (3) is established under conditions where $i_{rec} \geq 0$, $d_r \geq 0$, $i_{dc} > 0$, and $i_b \geq 0$.

10 [0096] The command value i_b^* of the current i_b is set to 0 so as to always satisfy $i_b \geq 0$. That is to say, the capacitor 34 is not charged during a period during which Expression (7) holds, and the capacitor 34 is discharged at a discharge duty d_c determined below. In this application, therefore, the period during which Expression (7) holds is referred to as a "discharge zone".

15 [0097] The rectifying duty d_r is determined according to Expression (8) below with the use of the command value i_{rec}^* and the estimated value $i_{dc}^{\wedge}$, in consideration of Expression (7).

[0098] $d_r = i_{rec}^* / i_{dc}^{\wedge} \dots (8)$

[0099] That is to say, in order to cause the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} to follow the
20 command value V_{dc}^* , the rectifying duty d_r is set to a ratio ($i_{rec}^* / i_{dc}^{\wedge}$) of the command value i_{rec}^* to the estimated value $i_{dc}^{\wedge}$.

[0100] Expression (9) below needs to hold in consideration of Expression (2) in order to cause the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} to follow the command value V_{dc}^* .

[0101] $V_{dc}^* = d_r \cdot V_{rec} + d_c \cdot V_c \dots (9)$

25 [0102] Herein, the rectifying duty d_r is set to a value set by Expression (8), and the

capacitor voltage V_c is substantially fixed. Thus, parameters that can be selected to make the right side of Expression (9) equal to the given command value V_{dc}^* are the zero voltage duty d_z and the discharge duty d_c .

[0103] The discharge duty d_c is determined according to Expression (10) below
5 directly led from Expression (9).

$$[0104] \quad d_c = (V_{dc}^* - d_r \cdot V_{rec}) / V_c \dots (10)$$

[0105] It is noted that the capacitor voltage V_c technically reduces during the period during which Expression (7) holds ("discharge zone"). This is because the command value i_b^* is set to 0 as described above. However, appropriately setting the command
10 value i_{rec}^* reduces the discharge zone to such an extent that a reduction in the capacitor voltage V_c can be ignored.

[0106] In Patent Documents 1 and 2 and Non-Patent 1 described above, the rectified current i_{rec} has a waveform of full-wave rectification, and thus, such selection of the command value i_{rec}^* was not considered. However, in this embodiment, since the
15 rectified current i_{rec} is not limited to the waveform of full-wave rectification, the discharge zone is shortened, and the discharge duty d_c can be set with Expression (10) where the capacitor voltage V_c is constant.

[0107] Due to the restricting condition of Expression (1), the zero voltage duty d_z is obtained by Expression (11) below.

$$20 \quad [0108] \quad d_z = 1 - d_r - d_c \dots (11)$$

[0109] As described above, during the discharge zone, the rectifying duty d_r is determined according to Expression (8) when the command value i_{rec}^* and the estimated value $i_{dc}^{\wedge}$ are obtained, and further, the discharge duty d_c and the zero voltage duty d_z are uniquely determined according to Expressions (10) and (11), respectively.

25 [0110] That is to say, the zero voltage duty d_z is not allowed to take a value greater

than or equal to a value determined by Expression (11), and is thus considered to be set to a minimum value thereof. That is to say, it can be regarded that the discharge duty d_c to make the zero voltage duty d_z minimum is set also in the discharge zone as in the charge zone and the charge and discharge zone.

5 [0111] When the rectifying duty d_r , the zero voltage duty d_z , the discharge duty d_c , and the command value i_b^* are determined in the manner above, the control signals S_b , S_c , and S_g can be generated using a known technique.

[0112] FIG. 4 is a block diagram illustrating a configuration of the controller 9. The controller 9 is roughly divided into a current command generator 91, a DC current
10 estimator 92, a duty divider 93, a pulse width modulation signal generator 94, and a chopper signal generator 95.

[0113] The current command generator 91 generates the command value i_{rec}^* of the rectified current i_{rec} . Although FIG. 4 illustrates a configuration in which the command value i_{rec}^* has an absolute value of a sinusoidal waveform as described below, the
15 command value i_{rec}^* is not always limited to providing such a waveform.

[0114] The DC current estimator 92 obtains the estimated value $\hat{i}_{dc}$ of the DC current i_{dc} . As is understood from the equivalent circuit of FIG. 3, an actual circuit has no portion that can actually measure the DC current i_{dc} . Therefore, the estimated value $\hat{i}_{dc}$ is adopted in the computations represented by Expressions (6) and (8).

20 [0115] An electric power to be output from the inverter 6 can be obtained in the equivalent circuit from the DC current i_{dc} and the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} . In contrast, an electric power to be output from the inverter 6 in an actual circuit is obtained from a three-phase current I_{inv} and a three-phase voltage V_{inv} to be output from the inverter 6. Therefore, theoretically, the estimated value $\hat{i}_{dc}$ can be obtained from the
25 virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} , the current I_{inv} , and the voltage V_{inv} .

[0116] It is noted that the voltage V_{inv} to be output from the inverter 6 is controlled by the pulse width modulation signal generator 94 to follow its command value V_{inv}^* . The virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} cannot be measured per se, but is controlled by the duty divider 93 to follow the command value V_{dc}^* . The current I_{inv} can be measured from
 5 wire connection between the inverter 6 and the permanent-magnet synchronous motor PMSM. In this embodiment, therefore, the estimated value $\hat{i}_{dc}$ is obtained from the command values V_{dc}^* and V_{inv}^* and the current I_{inv} . Needless to say, the estimated value $\hat{i}_{dc}$ may be obtained by another method.

[0117] The duty divider 93 determines the rectifying duty d_r , the zero voltage duty d_z ,
 10 the discharge duty d_c , and the command value i_b^* in accordance with the methods described in the first to third cases on the basis of the command values V_{dc}^* and i_{rec}^* , the capacitor voltage V_c , the rectified voltage V_{rec} , and the estimated value $\hat{i}_{dc}$. The expression "duty 'divider'" is given here because as represented by Expression (2), a value 1 is divided by the rectifying duty d_r , the zero voltage duty d_z , and the discharge duty d_c .

[0118] The pulse width modulation signal generator 94 generates the control signals S_c
 15 and S_g on the basis of the rectifying duty d_r , the zero voltage duty d_z , the discharge duty d_c , and the command values V_{inv}^* and V_{dc}^* . For example, these duties and respective phase portions of the command value V_{inv}^* are operated to generate signal waves, and the signal waves can be compared to a triangular carrier to generate the control signals S_c
 20 and S_g . Since such a method is publicly known and is described in, for example, Patent Documents 1 and 2, detailed description thereof will be omitted.

[0119] The chopper signal generator 95 has a boost chopper duty arithmetic unit 951
 and a pulse width modulation signal generator 952. The boost chopper duty arithmetic unit 951 determines the boost duty d_b on the basis of the command value i_b^* , the
 25 capacitor voltage V_c , and the rectified voltage V_{rec} .

[0120] A method for determining the boost duty db differs depending on a mode in which the boost chopper 3 operates. The method may be a normal method for determining the discharge duty of a boost chopper, and thus, detailed description thereof will be omitted.

5 [0121] The pulse width modulation signal generator 952 can also generate the control signal S_b from the boost duty db by a known modulation method.

[0122] A configuration of the current command generator 91 will now be described. The current command generator 91 has an output power estimator 911, a trigonometric function value generator 912, a capacitor voltage controller 913, an adder 914, a
10 multiplier 915, and a divider 916.

[0123] The output power estimator 911 obtains an estimated value $P_{out}^{\wedge}$ of an output power P_{out} based on the command value V_{inv}^* and the current I_{inv} . The DC current estimator 92, which obtains the estimated value $idc^{\wedge}$ as described above, may receive
15 inputs of the estimated value $P_{out}^{\wedge}$ obtained from the output power estimator 911 and the command value V_{dc}^* so as to obtain the estimated value $idc^{\wedge}$.

[0124] The capacitor voltage controller 913 obtains a deviation $V_c^* - V_c$ between the capacitor voltage V_c and its command value V_c^* and performs at least proportional control on the deviation $V_c^* - V_c$, then outputting the deviation $V_c^* - V_c$ to the adder 914.

20 [0125] The adder 914 adds an output from the capacitor voltage controller 913 to the estimated value $P_{out}^{\wedge}$. This is a process for suitably setting a command value P_{in}^* of the input power by correcting the estimated value $P_{out}^{\wedge}$ to be greater/smaller when the capacitor voltage V_c becomes smaller/greater than the command value V_c^* , thus reducing the deviation. For stability of the deviation, the capacitor voltage controller
25 913 desirably adopts not mere proportional control itself but proportional-integral control

or proportional-integral-derivative control.

[0126] Assumed here is a case in which the command value i_{rec}^* of the rectified current i_{rec} takes an absolute value of the sinusoidal waveform. The rectified voltage V_{rec} takes the absolute value of the sinusoidal waveform, and thus, an output from the adder 914 is multiplied by a trigonometric function value $2 \cdot \sin^2 \theta$, thus obtaining the command value P_{in}^* .

[0127] The trigonometric function value generator 912 generates the trigonometric function value $2 \cdot \sin^2 \theta$ based on a phase angle θ of the power-supply voltage. The multiplier 915 multiplies an addition result of the adder 914 and the trigonometric function value $2 \cdot \sin^2 \theta$ to obtain the command value P_{in}^* .

[0128] Since an input power P_{in} is a product of the rectified voltage V_{rec} and the rectified current i_{rec} , the command value i_{rec}^* of the rectified current i_{rec} is obtained by dividing the command value P_{in}^* by the rectified voltage V_{rec} .

[0129] The phase angle θ is estimated from, for example, the measured AC voltage V_{in} by a power-supply phase estimator 96. The power-supply phase estimator 96 can be constituted by, for example, a phase locked loop. The rectified voltage V_{rec} can be obtained, for example, in such a manner that an absolute value circuit 97 obtains an absolute value of the measured AC voltage V_{in} . Since specific configurations of the power-supply phase estimator 96 and the absolute value circuit 97 are publicly known techniques, which will not be described here in detail.

[0130] The command value V_{dc}^* is set by a virtual DC link voltage command value generator 98 on the basis of the command value V_{inv}^* according to the expression below. It is noted that the command value V_{dc}^* is a maximum value of the voltage V_{inv} (which is, here, an average in a cycle of controlling switching) of the inverter 6 as described above, and thus, setting the command value V_{dc}^* below the command value V_{inv}^* is not

appropriate. In other words, the command value V_{dc}^* needs to be increased in order to increase a maximum value of the command value V_{inv}^* . In a conventional direct power converter, the command value V_{dc}^* is smaller than or equal to $1/\sqrt{2}$ times the AC voltage V_{in} .

5 [0131] FIG. 5 is a flowchart summarizing steps of obtaining the rectifying duty d_r , the zero voltage duty d_z , the discharge duty d_c , and the command value i_b^* . It is grasped that this flowchart shows an operation of the duty divider 93.

[0132] Step S101 corresponds to a determination whether the operation of the direct AC power converter corresponds to the first case or the second case on the assumption
10 that the operation does not correspond to the third case. It is determined in Step S101 whether the command value V_{dc}^* of the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} is smaller than or equal to the rectified voltage V_{rec} . The process proceeds to Steps S102 and S104 if the determination is affirmative or proceeds to Steps S103 and S105 if the determination is negative.

15 [0133] Steps S102 and S104 are processes for determining whether the operation of the direct AC power converter corresponds to the first case or the third case. In Step S102, $d_{r_max} = V_{dc}^*/V_{rec}$ is obtained in consideration of Expression (4). It is determined in Step S104 whether the command value i_{rec}^* is greater than or equal to a value $d_{r_max} \cdot i_{dc}^*$ in consideration of Expression (7). If the determination in Step S104 is affirmative,
20 the operation of the direct AC power converter corresponds to the first case, and the process proceeds to Steps S106 and S109. If the determination in Step S104 is negative, the operation of the direct AC power converter corresponds to the third case, and the process proceeds to Steps S108 and S110.

[0134] Steps S103 and S105 are processes for determining whether the operation of the
25 direct AC power converter corresponds to the second case or the third case. In Step

S103, $dr_max = (V_{dc}^* - V_c)/(V_{rec} - V_c)$ is obtained in consideration of Expression (5).

In Step S105, whether the command value i_{rec}^* is greater than or equal to the value $dr_max \cdot i_{dc}^*$ is determined in consideration of Expression (7) as in Step S104. If the determination of Step S105 is affirmative, the operation of the direct AC power converter corresponds to the second case, and the process proceeds to Steps S107 and S109. If the determination is negative in Step S105, the operation of the direct AC power converter corresponds to the third case, and the process proceeds to Steps S108 and S110.

[0135] Steps S106, S107, and S108 are setting of duties respectively corresponding to the first case, the second case, and the third case. Step S109 is the setting of the command value i_b^* according to the first case and the second case, and Step S110 is the setting of the command value i_b^* according to the third case. These setting contents are as described above.

[0136] If $V_{dc} > V_{rec}$, Step S107 or S108 is performed according to the determination result of Step S101. When Step S107 is performed, the discharge duty dc takes a value $(1 - dr)$. In this case, the rectifying duty dr is represented by Expression (5) and is smaller than 1. In this case, therefore, the discharge duty dc is greater than 0.

[0137] When Step S108 is performed, the discharge duty dc takes a value represented by Expression (10). If $V_{dc} > V_{rec}$, a numerator of the right side of Expression (10) is greater than 0 irrespective of the value of the rectifying duty dr . Also in this case, therefore, the discharge duty dc is greater than 0.

[0138] That is to say, when $V_{dc} > V_{rec}$, setting is always made such that $dc > 0$.

[0139] The controller 9 can be implemented by, for example, a microcomputer and a storage device. The microcomputer executes the respective steps (in other words, the procedure) described in a program. The storage device can be configured by, for example, one or a plurality of various storage devices such as a ROM (Read Only

Memory), a RAM (Random Access Memory), a rewritable non-volatile memory (such as EPROM (Erasable Programmable ROM)), and a hard disc device. The storage device stores various information, data, and the like, stores a program to be executed by the microcomputer, and provides a work area for executing the program. It can be grasped
 5 that the microcomputer functions as various means corresponding to the respective processing steps described in the program or implements various functions corresponding to the respective steps. Further, the controller 9 is not limited to this, and some or all of various procedures (such as obtaining respective measured values and executing Steps S101 to S110) to be executed by the controller 9, or respective elements or various
 10 functions of the controller 9 may be implemented by hardware.

[0140] Examples

Examples describing the effects of the use of the above methods will be described below.

[0141] Two examples of the case in which the command value V_{dc}^* takes a constant
 15 value will be described first, and then, an example of a desirable value of the command value V_{dc}^* will be described.

[0142] Example 1

FIGs. 6 and 7 are graphs showing waveforms of specifications obtained by simulation. It is noted that the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} is set to $1/\sqrt{2}$ (212 V) of a
 20 crest value (300 V) of the rectified voltage V_{rec} . The capacitor voltage V_c is higher than the rectified voltage V_{rec} and is constant (400 V) (the same applies to the following).

[0143] A first tier of FIG. 6 shows waveforms of the capacitor voltage V_c , the rectified voltage V_{rec} , and the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} (this is assumed to accurately follow its
 25 command value V_{dc}^* : the same applies to the following).

[0144] A second tier of FIG. 6 shows waveforms of the rectified current i_{rec} (this is assumed to accurately follow its command value i_{rec}^* : the same applies to the following) and the DC current i_{dc} (this is assumed to accurately estimated by the estimated value $i_{dc}^{\wedge}$: the same applies to the following). The DC current i_{dc} set to a constant value, in cooperation with the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} that takes a constant value, makes the output power P_{out} constant.

[0145] A third tier of FIG. 6 shows waveforms of the rectified current i_{rec} , the current i_{direct} (this is obtained by a product of the rectifying duty d_r and the estimated value $i_{dc}^{\wedge}$: the same applies to the following), and the current i_b (this is assumed to accurately follow the command value i_b^* : the same applies to the following).

[0146] A fourth tier of FIG. 6 shows waveforms of the rectifying duty d_r , the discharge duty d_c , and the zero voltage duty d_z .

[0147] A fifth tier of FIG. 6 shows waveforms of the DC current i_{dc} , the current i_{direct} , the current i_c flowing from the capacitor 34 to the DC link 7 (this is obtained by a product of the discharge duty d_c and the estimated value $i_{dc}^{\wedge}$: the same applies to the following), and a zero-phase current i_z (this is obtained by a product of the zero voltage duty d_z and the estimated value $i_{dc}^{\wedge}$: the same applies to the following).

[0148] A first tier of FIG. 7 shows waveforms of an output power P_{out} to be output from the inverter 6 (this is assumed to be accurately estimated by its estimated value $P_{out}^{\wedge}$: the same applies to the following), an electric power P_{direct} to be determined based on the rectified voltage V_{rec} and the current i_{direct} , an electric power (discharge power) P_{co} to be discharged from the capacitor 34, and an electric power P_c to be input/output to/from the capacitor 34. The electric power P_c takes a negative value because it reduces the output power P_{out} in charging.

[0149] A second tier of FIG. 7 shows waveforms of the input power P_{in} (this is

assumed to accurately follow the command value P_{in}^* : the same applies to the following), the electric power P_{direct} , an electric power (charge power) P_{ci} with which the capacitor 34 is charged, and the electric power P_c .

[0150] A third tier of FIG. 7 is a graph summarizing electric powers P_c , P_{ci} , and P_{co} related to the capacitor 34, which are extracted from the first and second tiers of FIG. 7.

[0151] The capacitor 34 is charged but is not discharged during "charge" periods in FIGs. 6 and 7 ($P_{ci} > 0$, $P_{co} = 0$). Specifically, the "charge" period is a period during which the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} is smaller than or equal to the rectified voltage V_{rec} and $i_c = 0$ (that is, $dc = 0$), and Steps S106 and S109 of FIG. 5 are performed.

10 [0152] The capacitor 34 is discharged but is not charged during the "discharge" period ($P_{co} > 0$, $P_{ci} = 0$). Specifically, the "discharge" period is a period during which the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} is greater than the rectified voltage V_{rec} and $i_z > 0$ (that is, $dz > 0$), and Steps S108 and S110 of FIG. 5 are performed.

[0153] The "charge and discharge" period is a period during which the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} is greater than the rectified voltage V_{rec} and $i_z = 0$ (that is, $dz = 0$), and Steps S107 and S109 of FIG. 5 are performed. The "charge and discharge" period includes a period during which the electric power P_{ci} with which the capacitor 34 is charged is greater than the electric power P_{co} to be discharged from the capacitor 34 (that is, a period during which $P_c < 0$: this is adjacent to the "charge" period and is separate from the "discharge" period) and a period during which the electric power P_{co} to be discharged from the capacitor 34 is greater than the electric power P_{ci} with which the capacitor 34 is charged (that is, the period during which $P_c > 0$: this is adjacent to the "discharge" period and is separate from the "charge" period).

[0154] The "charge and discharge" period is provided and the capacitor 34 is charged also in this period as described above, so that the average value or the effective value of

the current i_b can be reduced more than in the conventional technique in which a capacitor is charged only during the "charge" period. This contributes to a reduction in the rated current required for the inductor 32, and accordingly, a reduction in the power capacity required for the boost chopper 3.

5 [0155] It is noted that in the case shown in FIGs. 6 and 7, the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} is set to $1/\sqrt{2}$ times the crest value of the rectified voltage V_{rec} . Therefore, the following will be described: while the rectified current i_{rec} has a sinusoidal waveform, the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} can be set to be higher than $1/\sqrt{2}$ times the crest value of the rectified voltage V_{rec} .

10 [0156] Example 2

FIGs. 8 and 9 are graphs showing waveforms of specifications obtained by simulation through control in accordance with the method of this embodiment. FIG. 8 shows the waveforms of the specifications corresponding to FIG. 6. FIG. 9 shows the waveforms of the specifications corresponding to FIG. 7 except for the graph shown in
15 the lowest tier. FIGs. 8 and 9 show the case in which the crest value of the rectified voltage V_{rec} is set to 300 V as in FIGs. 6 and 7, the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} is set to be equal to the crest value of the rectified voltage V_{rec} , and the waveform of the rectified current i_{rec} is the absolute value of the sinusoidal wave.

[0157] When the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} is equal to the crest value of the rectified
20 voltage V_{rec} as described above, $dc = 0$ holds only at a phase of 90° or 270° . FIGs. 8 and 9 therefore show no "charge" period.

[0158] Further, when the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} is smaller than the capacitor voltage V_c , control can be performed to always make the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} greater than the rectified voltage V_{rec} . In this case, $dc > 0$ always holds, and Step S106
25 is performed in no case as shown in the flowchart of FIG. 5. Needless to say, since

Expression (1) holds, $d_r < 1$.

[0159] Examples 1 and 2 reveal that the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} can be set to be greater than or equal to $1/\sqrt{2}$ times the crest value of the rectified voltage V_{rec} .

[0160] In particular, Example 2 reveals that the waveform of the rectified current i_{rec} can be the absolute value of a sinusoidal wave. This contributes to the restriction of the power line harmonics.

[0161] Example 3

As described in Example 1, when the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} is greater than the rectified voltage V_{rec} , there is a "charge and discharge" period during which $dz =$
 10 0. The voltage V_{inv} output from the inverter 6 during this period is not a DC voltage but an AC voltage. When the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} takes a constant value, therefore, the inverter 6 operates with a zero voltage vector for the voltage V_{inv} to be AC if $dz = 0$.

[0162] This means that the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} is excessive with respect to the
 15 voltage V_{inv} , and the capacitor 34 is charged and discharged unnecessarily.

[0163] Description will now be given of the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} for reducing the unnecessary charge and discharge of the capacitor 34 and reducing the power capacity of the boost chopper 3.

[0164] Both FIGs. 10 and 11 show, in an upper tier, command values V_u^* , V_v^* , and
 20 V_w^* of three phases as the command value V_{inv}^* of the inverter 6 and the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} and show, in a lower tier, line-to-line voltages V_{uv} , V_{vw} , and V_{wu} obtained by the inverter 6 outputting the voltage V_{inv} based on the command values V_u^* , V_v^* , and V_w^* . In the command values V_u^* , V_v^* , and V_w^* , a minimum-phase voltage (minimum value) of them is zero. The horizontal axis common to FIGs. 10 and 11 is the
 25 phase of the AC voltage V_{in} , and illustrated herein is the case in which the cycle of the

AC voltage V_{in} is twice the cycles of the line-to-line voltages V_{uv} , V_{vw} , and V_{wu} .

[0165] FIG. 10 shows the case in which the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} takes a constant value. The constant value is a maximum value that the command values V_u^* , V_v^* , and V_w^* can take with respect to a minimum-phase voltage of the command values of three phases (hereinbelow, this value is a value V_2).

[0166] It is revealed that with a phase of $(15 + 30 \cdot n)$ degrees (n is an integer) and therearound, the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} is greater than the command values V_u^* , V_v^* , and V_w^* and is thus a value greater than or equal to a voltage required for the line-to-line voltages V_{uv} , V_{vw} , and V_{wu} . In such a case, even when $dz = 0$, the inverter 6 adopts the zero voltage vector in order to output a voltage lower than the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} .

[0167] That is to say, at a phase of $(15 + 30 \cdot n)$ degrees (n is an integer) and therearound, the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} is set to be unnecessarily high in view of the operation of the inverter 6. This results in unnecessary discharge for obtaining such an unnecessarily high virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} .

[0168] When the command value V_{dc}^* of the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} is set without being unnecessarily increased with respect to the command values V_u^* , V_v^* , and V_w^* , an unnecessary discharge of the capacitor 34 is reduced, and accordingly, an unnecessary charge of the capacitor 34 is reduced.

[0169] This will be described with reference to the flowchart of FIG. 5. Since an improvement in the case in which $dz = 0$ is considered here, Step S103 that leads to Step S107 of setting $dz = 0$ is considered. Normally, $V_c > V_{rec}$ and $V_c > V_{dc}^*$, and thus, dr_{max} becomes greater as the command value V_{dc}^* is smaller. As the command value V_{dc}^* is smaller, thus, the rectifying duty dr set in Step S107 is greater and the discharge duty dc is smaller. Since the capacitor voltage V_c can be considered to be constant, a

smaller discharge duty means a smaller current i_c .

[0170] Further, Step S109 processed after Step S107 will also be considered. As described above, the rectifying duty d_r becomes greater as the command value V_{dc}^* is smaller. The output power P_{out} is made constant, and accordingly, the pulsation of the
 5 command value V_{dc}^* causes the DC current i_{dc} to pulsate. Specifically, the DC current i_{dc} becomes greater as the command value V_{dc}^* is smaller. Thus, both the rectifying duty d_r and the DC current i_{dc} are greater as the command value V_{dc}^* is smaller, and the rectified current i_{rec} does not depend on the command value V_{dc}^* as a sinusoidal wave, and accordingly, the current i_b is small.

10 [0171] Such reductions in the currents i_b and i_c contribute to a reduction in the power capacities required for the inductor 32 and the capacitor 34, and accordingly, miniaturization of the inductor 32 and the capacitor 34, cost reduction, and an improvement in efficiency owing to a reduced calorific value, and further contribute to a reduction in the power capacity required for the boost chopper 3.

15 [0172] Specifically, the command value V_{dc}^* may be the greatest command value among the command values V_u^* , V_v^* , and V_w^* with respect to a minimum phase. This is because while the inverter 6 cannot output a large voltage exceeding the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} , it suffices that the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} is the greatest command value among the command values V_u^* , V_v^* , and V_w^* with respect to a minimum phase.

20 [0173] That is to say, the command value V_{dc}^* may have $V_1 = \max(V_u^*, V_v^*, V_w^*) - \min(V_u^*, V_v^*, V_w^*)$, where a symbol " $\max()$ " represents the greatest one among the elements within a parenthesis, and a symbol " $\min()$ " represents the smallest one among the elements within a parenthesis.

[0174] Under normal control, phase voltages V_u , V_v , and V_w output from the inverter
 25 6 respectively match the command values V_u^* , V_v^* , and V_w^* , and thus, can be obtained

as $V1 = \max(Vu, Vv, Vw) - \min(Vu, Vv, Vw)$. This can be obtained as $V1 = \max(|Vuv|, |Vvw|, |Vwu|)$ using line-to-line voltages Vuv , Vvw , and Vwu .

[0175] Similarly, the value $V2$ can be obtained as a maximum value that the phase voltages Vu , Vv , and Vw output from the inverter 6 can take with respect to a minimum phase among them. This means that the value $V2$ can be obtained as a maximum value that the respective absolute values $|Vuv|$, $|Vvw|$, and $|Vwu|$ of the line-to-line voltages Vuv , Vvw , and Vwu can take.

[0176] FIG. 11 illustrates a case in which the command value Vdc^* takes the value $V1$. Also in this case, the command values Vu^* , Vv^* , and Vw^* can take the same values as those of FIG. 10, and thus, the line-to-line voltages Vuv , Vvw , and Vwu also do not differ between FIGs. 10 and 11.

[0177] Needless to say, the command value Vdc^* may take a value greater than the value $V1$. In the case shown in FIG. 10, the command value Vdc^* takes the value $V2$ greater than the value $V1$, and thus, it suffices that $V1 \leq Vdc^* \leq V2$.

[0178] More accurately, it is desirable that $Vdc^* = V2$ at a phase (with reference to FIGs. 10 and 11, $(30 \cdot n)$ degrees) at which the command values Vu^* , Vv^* , and Vw^* are maximum with respect to a minimum phase and that $V1 \leq Vdc^* < V2$ at the other phases.

[0179] The command value Vdc^* can be set as described above in the virtual DC link voltage command value generator 98 shown in FIG. 4.

[0180] FIG. 12 shows waveforms of the specifications corresponding to FIG. 8 in Example 3. FIG. 13 shows the specifications corresponding to FIG. 9 and waveforms of line-to-line voltages. For brevity of the drawings, the cycles of the line-to-line voltages Vuv , Vvw , and Vwu are set to a half of the cycle of the AC voltage Vin , and the amplitudes of the line-to-line voltages Vuv , Vvw , and Vwu are set to be equal to the amplitude of the AC voltage Vin .

[0181] It is revealed that while the DC current i_{dc} fluctuates correspondingly to the variation of the command value V_{dc}^* , the waveform of the rectified current i_{rec} can take an absolute value of a sinusoidal wave. As described with reference to FIG. 5, the currents i_b and i_c also reduce at phases at which the command value V_{dc}^* reduces.

5 [0182] FIG. 14 is a graph in which the current i_b is compared between Examples 2 and 3. The current i_b in Example 2 is indicated by the current i_{b1} , and the current i_b in Example 3 is indicated by the current i_{b2} . It is understood that the current i_{b2} is always smaller than or equal to the current i_{b1} and that the effective value and the average value of the current i_{b2} are smaller than the effective value and the average value of the current
10 i_{b1} .

[0183] FIG. 15 is a graph in which the current i_c is compared between Examples 2 and 3. The current i_c in Example 2 is indicated by the current i_{c1} , and the current i_c in Example 3 is indicated by the current i_{c2} . It is understood that the current i_{c2} is always smaller than or equal to the current i_{c1} and that the effective value and the average value
15 of the current i_{c2} are smaller than the effective value and the average value of the current i_{c1} .

[0184] It is revealed that both the currents i_{b2} and i_{c2} reduce at a phase $(15 + 30 \cdot n)$ degrees at which the command value V_{dc}^* reduces and therearound.

[0185] Next, the operation of the inverter 6 in the period in which $d_z = 0$ will be
20 described.

[0186] FIGs. 16 and 17 are graphs showing a carrier C_Y and a signal wave to be compared with the carrier C_Y , an operation of the switch G_c , a DC current i_{dc} and an instantaneous value V_{link} between DC link voltages, an output power P_{out} , and switching states of respective phases that will be described below. Herein, a minimum
25 value of the carrier C_Y is 0, and a maximum value of the carrier C_Y is 1. Values du^* ,

dv^* , and dw^* are adopted to generate a signal wave and are set based on the command values Vu^* , Vv^* , and Vw^* of the inverter 6 by the known technique. Specifically, $du^* = Vu^*/Vdc^*$, $dv^* = Vv^*/Vdc^*$, and $dw^* = Vw^*/Vdc^*$.

[0187] Both FIGs. 16 and 17 show an operation in areas in which a U-phase voltage output from the inverter 6 is a minimum phase, a W-phase voltage output from the inverter 6 is a maximum phase, $Vu^* < Vv^* < Vw^*$ holds, and none of the command values Vv^* and Vw^* peaks (zones of 135 degrees or more and less than 150 degrees, more than 150 degrees and 165 degrees or less, 315 degrees or more and less than 330, and more than 330 degrees and 345 degrees or less in terms of phases: see FIG. 10). In such a case, $Vu^* = 0$, and $dz = 0$ (see also FIG. 12).

[0188] A period t_c is a period in which the switch G_c turns on. In the period t_c , accordingly, the capacitor 34 is discharged, the instantaneous value V_{link} is the capacitor voltage V_c , and the electric power P_{co} provides the output power P_{out} . A period t_r is a period in which the switch G_c turns off. In the period t_r , accordingly, the instantaneous value V_{link} provides the rectified voltage V_{rec} , and the electric power P_{direct} is the output power P_{out} .

[0189] The control signal S_g is determined through the comparison between the carrier CY and the signal wave, and accordingly, the switching operation of the inverter 6 is determined. Specifically, for example, the inverter 6 is a three-phase voltage-source inverter and has a current path (leg) per phase. Each leg has a series connection between an upper arm and a lower arm, and switches are used as the upper arm and the lower arm that are conductive exclusively (see FIG. 1).

[0190] More specifically, in the U-phase leg, the upper arm is conductive and the lower arm is not conductive when the carrier CY is smaller than or equal to the signal wave $dr \cdot du^*$ or is greater than or equal to the signal wave $dr + dc \cdot (1 - du^*)$. In the other case, the

lower arm is conductive and the upper arm is not conductive. The same applies to the V-phase leg and the W-phase leg.

[0191] Such a control signal S_g that determines conductivity/non-conductivity is generated in the pulse width modulation signal generator 94. The carrier CY is generated in, for example, the pulse width modulation signal generator 94.

[0192] The lowest three rows of each of FIGs. 16 and 17 indicate the switching states in the U-phase, the V-phase, and the W-phase of the inverter 6. In these three lines, a symbol "H" indicates the state in which the upper arm is conductive and the lower arm is not conductive, and a symbol "L" indicates the state in which the lower arm is conductive and the upper arm is not conductive.

[0193] In the areas of the phases described above, $V_u^* = 0$ and signal wave $dr \cdot du^* = 0$, $dr + dc \cdot (1 - du^*) = 1$ ($\therefore dz = 0$), and thus, the case in which the lower arm is kept conductive is illustrated for the U-phase. That is to say, switching does not occur at the U-phase leg in this area.

[0194] In such a case, when $V_{dc}^* > V_w^*$ as shown in FIG. 10, as shown in FIG. 16, a signal wave has a relationship $dr + dc \cdot (1 - dw^*) < dr < dr \cdot dw^*$, where $dz = 0$ is taken into consideration. This results in the presence of a zone t_0 with a width corresponding to a difference $(1 - dw^*)$ between the command values $dr + dc \cdot (1 - dw^*)$ and $dr \cdot dw^*$. The zone t_0 is a period in which although $dz = 0$, the inverter 6 adopts a zero voltage vector.

[0195] In the zone t_0 , the inverter 6 adopts the zero voltage vector, so that the DC current i_{dc} is 0 and the instantaneous value of the output power P_{out} is also 0. Nevertheless, the zone t_0 includes a period in which the switch G_c is conductive and the instantaneous value V_{link} increases, and a discharge of the capacitor 34 during this period is an unnecessary discharge in view of the operation of the inverter 6.

[0196] When the command values are equal between the case shown in FIG. 16 and the case shown in FIG. 17, a period in which the instantaneous value V_{link} takes the capacitor voltage V_c is shortened by setting $V_{dc}^* = V_w^*$ as shown in FIG. 11. That is to say, the period t_c is shortened. This results from a reduction in the discharge duty d_c described above.

[0197] Setting $V_{dc}^* = V_w^*$, the upper arm is always conductive in the W-phase leg in the area of the phase described above. That is to say, no switching operation is required in the W-phase leg, that is, not only switching based on a minimum one (herein, command value V_u^*) among the command values is not required, but also switching based on a maximum one (herein, command value V_w^*) among the command values is not required. Unlike FIG. 16, there is accordingly no zone t_0 as shown in FIG. 17.

[0198] Since $dz = 0$, a shorter period t_c results in a longer period t_r , a greater output power P_{out} (that is to say, electric power P_{direct}) in the period t_r , and a smaller output power P_{out} (that is to say, electric power P_{co}) in the period t_c . The average of the output power P_{out} , however, can be maintained even when the command value V_{dc}^* is reduced.

[0199] The effect of reducing the period t_c for a reduced period t_r is obtained by reducing the duration of a zone t_0 even in the presence of such a zone t_0 . The effect is thus obtained if $V_{dc}^* = V_1$ (V_w^* in the example above) does not always hold.

[0200] Through setting of the command value V_{dc}^* to be greater than or equal to the value V_1 and smaller than or equal to the value V_2 , the discharge duty d_c can be reduced, the currents i_c and i_b can be reduced, and the power capacities required for the boost chopper and the capacitor 34 and the inductor 32, which are components of the boost chopper, can be reduced while the output voltage from the direct AC power converter is increased more than in the conventional case. The virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} takes the

command value V_{dc}^* in the normal control, and thus, the effect described above can be obtained when the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} is greater than or equal to the value $V1$ and smaller than or equal to the value $V2$.

[0201] In particular, setting the command value V_{dc}^* to the value $V1$ eliminates the need for the switching operations of two phases among the legs of the three phases of the inverter 6. This is desirable not only in that the generation of a control signal S_g for substantially two phases is omitted but also in that a switching loss of the inverter 6 is reduced.

[0202] Needless to say, even when the command value V_{dc}^* is not always set to the value $V1$, a switching loss of the inverter 6 is reduced during a period during which the command value V_{dc}^* is set to the value $V1$. In other words, the presence of the period during which the command value V_{dc}^* is set to the value $V1$ contributes to a reduction in the switching loss of the inverter 6.

[0203] The virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} takes the command value V_{dc}^* in normal control. Therefore, the presence of the period during which the virtual DC link voltage V_{dc} takes the value $V1$ reduces a switching loss of the inverter 6.

[0204] While the invention has been shown and described in detail, the foregoing description is in all aspects illustrative and not restrictive. It is therefore understood that numerous modifications and variations can be devised without departing from the scope of the invention.

CLAIMS

1. A direct AC power converter comprising:
 - a DC link (7) having
 - a first power supply line (L1), and
 - 5 a second power supply line (L2) to which a potential lower than a potential of said first power supply line is applied;
 - a first rectifying circuit (5, 51) having
 - a plurality of input terminals that receive an input of an AC voltage,
 - and
 - 10 a pair of output terminals (51c, 51d) each connected to said DC link;
 - an inverter (6) that converts a voltage applied to said DC link into another multi-phase AC voltage;
 - a boost chopper (3) having a capacitor (34) in an output stage thereof; and
 - a switch (41) that performs a discharge/non-discharge from said capacitor to
 - 15 said DC link,
- wherein
 - in said boost chopper, said capacitor is charged at least during a first period being a part of a period during which a discharge duty (dc) is greater than 0, said discharge duty being a time ratio at which said switch is conductive,
 - 20 a virtual DC link voltage (Vdc) is greater than or equal to a first value (V1) and smaller than or equal to a second value (V2), said virtual DC link voltage being expressed as a sum of a product ($dc \cdot Vc$) of said discharge duty and a voltage between both ends (Vc) of said capacitor and a product ($dr \cdot Vrec$) of a rectifying duty (dr) and a rectified voltage (Vrec) of said AC voltage,
 - 25 said rectifying duty takes a value obtained by subtracting a sum of said

discharge duty and a zero voltage duty (d_z) from 1,

said zero voltage duty is a time ratio at which said inverter (6) adopts a zero voltage vector irrespective of magnitude of a voltage output from said inverter (6),

said first value is a maximum value ($\max(|V_{uv}|, |V_{vw}|, |V_{wu}|)$) among absolute
 5 values of respective line-to-line voltages of said multi-phase AC voltage, and

said second value is a maximum value that said absolute values are capable of taking.

2. The direct AC power converter according to claim 1, wherein said capacitor
 10 (34) is charged in said boost chopper during said first period and a part or whole of a period at which said discharge duty (d_c) is 0.

3. The direct AC power converter according to claim 1 or 2, wherein
 said capacitor (34) is charged and discharged with a charge power (P_{ci}) and a
 15 discharge power (P_{co}) during said first period, and

said first period has a period during which said charge power is greater than said discharge power and a period during which said discharge power is greater than said charge power.

20 4. The direct AC power converter according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein a period during which said virtual DC link voltage (V_{dc}) takes said first value (V_1) is present.

5. The direct AC power converter according to any one of claims 1 to 4,
 25 wherein said discharge duty at which said zero voltage duty (d_z) is minimum is set based

on a command value (i_{rec}^*) of a rectified current (i_{rec}) being a sum of a current (i_b) flowing in said boost chopper (3) and a current (i_{direct}) flowing from said first rectifying circuit to said inverter (6), a command value (V_{dc}^*) of said virtual DC link voltage (V_{dc}), a voltage between both ends (V_c) of said capacitor, said rectified voltage (V_{rec}), and a
 5 current (i_{dc}) input to said inverter (6).

6. The direct AC power converter according to claim 5, wherein
 when said virtual DC link voltage (V_{dc}) is greater than said rectified voltage (V_{rec}) and said command value (i_{rec}^*) of said rectified current (i_{rec}) is greater than or
 10 equal to a product of a predetermined value (dr_max) and a current (i_{dc}) input to said inverter (6), said rectifying duty (dr) takes said predetermined value, and said discharge duty (dc) takes a value obtained by subtracting said predetermined value from 1, and
 said predetermined value is a value $((V_{dc}^* - V_c)/(V_{rec} - V_c))$ obtained by dividing a value obtained by subtracting said voltage between both ends (V_c) of said
 15 capacitor from said command value (V_{dc}^*) of said virtual DC link voltage (V_{dc}) by a value obtained by subtracting said voltage between both ends (V_c) from said rectified voltage (V_{rec}).

7. The direct AC power converter according to any one of claims 1 to 6, further
 20 comprising
 a second rectifying circuit (52) that inputs said rectified voltage (V_{rec}) to said boost chopper (3).

8. The direct AC power converter according to any one of claims 1 to 6,
 25 wherein said pair of output terminals of said first rectifying circuit are connected to an

input side of said boost chopper.

9. The direct AC power converter according to claim 1 or any one of claims 3 to 8, wherein said discharge duty (dc) is always positive.

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10. The direct AC power converter according to any one of claims 1 to 9, further comprising

a diode in parallel with said switch (41), a forward direction of said diode is a direction in which said capacitor (34) is charged from said DC link (7).

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