

DC VOLTAGE CONVERTING DEVICE

DESCRIPTION

A DC voltage converting device is connected to a DC voltage source on the input side. On the output side, the converting device supplies a converted DC voltage to at least one electrical consumer.

Such DC voltage converting devices are in particular used in fields where DC voltages must be converted and/or stabilized. Typical applications are e.g. photovoltaic installations, the automotive industry, direct-current traction drives for subways and streetcars, household drives for hair dryer, drilling machine, or the like, telecommunications and also semiconductor technology.

If a high DC voltage is present on the input side, a corresponding conversion into another DC voltage is difficult as a rule because corresponding components of the converting device do not show a sufficiently high breakdown strength. Moreover, in the case of a high power to be transmitted, the heat developed in the converting device may be considerable even if the power loss is only 10 or 20%. To be able to discharge the power loss converted into heat, corresponding cooling means must be provided. This makes the converting device more expensive and also larger due to the additional cooling means.

It is therefore the object of the present invention to improve a DC voltage converting device of the above-mentioned type such that also with high DC voltages on the input side a conversion into another DC voltage is possible without any special constructional efforts and high costs while complicated cooling means, or the like, are avoided at the same time.

In connection with the features of the preamble of patent claim 1, this object is achieved in that the DC voltage converting device comprises a plurality of DC voltage converting units of which each is serially connected to the DC voltage source on the input side and connected in parallel with the cable connection on the output side for supplying the corresponding DC voltage for the electrical consumer.

Due to the use of the converting units and the special wiring with respect to the DC voltage source, each unit converts only part of the high DC voltage applied. For instance, if there is a DC voltage of 6000 V on the input side, each of the converting units will only convert the n th fraction of the input voltage if these are of an identical construction and on condition that there is a number of n converting units. For instance, if n is 30, each converting unit would only convert 200 V. The breakdown strength of the corresponding components of the converting units is normally considerably higher than 200 V, so that there is no risk in this respect.

On the output side, depending on the design of the converting units and with a corresponding wiring to the cable connection, it is e.g. possible to provide a value of 300 V for the electrical consumer.

Of course, it is possible to use different numbers of converting units, the number following e.g. from the high DC voltage applied on the input side, from the output voltage needed by the electrical consumer, or the like. It is also possible that the converting units are of no similar construction, but convert e.g. different amounts of the input voltage per converting unit into a corresponding output voltage. However, for reasons of maintenance and repair, it is of greater advantage to give all converting units an identical design.

Moreover, it is ensured through the number of the converting units that, when one, two, three or even more converting units fail, a complete failure of the voltage supply

to the electrical consumer need not be feared (redundancy). Instead of this, the converting units that are still operative can receive more voltage on the input side and convert the same into the output voltage required.

A further advantage of the use of a plurality of converting units is that even with increased powers in the kW range of e.g. 6000 volt and 1, 2, 3 or more amp, the power loss of the converting device is distributed over the corresponding converting units. Heat corresponding to the power loss is thus not generated pointwise and within a confined space, but the heat is generated such that it is substantially evenly distributed over all converting units. This simplifies the cooling process considerably and, as a rule, just requires a simple air cooling or no further cooling than by the environment, depending on the respective arrangement of the converting units.

For instance, the converting units may be spaced apart from one another such that they do not mutually affect one another in their heat development, and each converting unit can thus be cooled separately.

Depending on the number and design of the converting units, DC voltages of about 1 kV to 10 kV and, in particular, 3 kV to 8 kV may be present on the input side. It should once again be pointed out that even higher input voltages with a correspondingly high power can be converted if the number of the converting units or their corresponding construction is matched accordingly. Attention must here above all be paid that the breakdown strength of the components of every converting unit is at least so high that the amount of the input voltage to be converted by the converting unit is smaller than the breakdown strength.

To be able to receive the DC voltages without any great loss or interference also over large distances from the DC voltage source, the DC voltage converting device may be connected via a coaxial cable connection to the DC voltage source. Even at high DC voltages and high powers, such a coaxial cable connection may have a

small cross-section, whereby the costs are considerably reduced, for instance, in comparison with an AC voltage supply. Moreover, a coaxial cable connection is well suited also for data transmission in addition to transmitting electrical power. As for a DC voltage transmission, attention must further be paid that there are only conductor losses and no attenuation losses in addition, as is the case with the transmission of AC voltage.

To be able to transmit data sent via the cable connection in the direction of the DC voltage source, i.e. without interference and at a high speed, the DC voltage converting device may comprise a filter means arranged upstream on the input side.

To use highly efficient converting units that, consequently, only generate a small amount of heat and thus ensure a high reliability and, economically speaking, are excellent in production and operation at the same time, a corresponding DC voltage converting unit may be designed as a clocked switch mode power supply. In comparison with e.g. linear controlled power supplies, these offer the further advantage that they show a small volume, a reduced noise development, reduced smoothing demands and an increased input voltage range.

The switch mode power supplies are subdivided into primarily and secondarily clocked or switched ones. To ensure an electrical isolation between input and output of the converting device, the switch mode power supply may preferably be clocked (switched) primarily.

If, in particular, high output powers are to be generated in the kW range, the switch mode power supply may be designed as a push-pull converter. Such a converter is further characterized by a lower current load of its semiconductor components, an easy adjustability of the output voltage, high efficiency and a small transformer as the transforming means.

Such a push-pull converter may be designed as a half-bridge or full-bridge push-pull converter. In particular for maximum powers the switch mode power supply may be designed as a full-bridge push-pull converter.

A switching means for correspondingly switching the transformer of the switch mode power supply may e.g. be designed as a switching transistor, in particular a power MOSFET or BIMOSFET. It is also possible that the switching means is designed as a thyristor.

In a push-pull converter, at least two switching transistors are used that operate in the push-pull mode. Advantageously, it is also possible to operate in the push-pull mode with a clock ratio of 1:1. This means that both switching transistors are each switched through alternately for the same periods of time.

To obtain an output voltage that is as smooth as possible and has a relatively small amount of harmonics, the switch mode power supplies of the DC converting device may be clocked in synchronism. This means that all switch mode power supplies are clocked at the same clock rate.

To increase a cutoff frequency of the system as much as possible with respect to interferences of the DC voltage on the secondary side, the switch mode power supplies of the DC converting device may be clocked with respect to one another in phase-shifted fashion.

To produce corresponding harmonics only to a small degree in this connection, a phase shift in the clocking of neighboring switch mode power supplies may be $1/n$ each if n is the number of the switch mode power supplies of the DC voltage converting device. Hence, the phase shift is such that the $n+1$ th switch mode power supply would be again in phase with the first switch mode power supply (cyclic phase shift).

To transmit also data in particular via the coaxial cable connection to the DC voltage source, a data signal coupling/decoupling means may be arranged upstream of the filter means in the direction of the DC voltage source. Said means serves the communication with the DC voltage source that is possibly far away and with all of the further means located there. This communication connection also serves to monitor, control and, optionally, regulate the components of the DC voltage converting device and the electrical consumers connected therewith via the cable connection.

To monitor, control and regulate the corresponding components of the DC voltage converting device on site, a controller may be assigned at least to the DC voltage converting device and the components thereof. However, the controller may also be responsible for electrical consumers supplied by the converting device with DC voltage and may monitor the same in their function and carry out the control or regulation of the consumers.

To ensure an undisturbed transmission of a communication connection in this respect and to scan the DC voltage on the input side substantially completely at the same time, the clock rate of the switch mode power supply may be in the range of 10 kHz to more than 1 MHz and, in particular, in the range of 50 kHz to 300 kHz.

In this connection each switch mode power supply can e.g. be readjusted in its output voltage via changes in the duty factor, in particular, in case of failure of another switch mode power supply of the DC voltage converting device.

In the simplest case a readjustment of the output voltage of a switch mode power supply can take place via a change in the duty factor of the switching transistor.

To control the switching transistors accordingly, the switch mode power supply may comprise a pulse modulation means for the clocked control of the switching transistors, the pulse modulation means supplying a sequence of pulses of a variable width and/or height and/or frequency for clocking the switching transistors.

In connection with the filter means, it should additionally be mentioned that said means filters, in particular, the frequency range within which the communication connection to the DC voltage source takes place. This means that only a lower frequency range of up to e.g. 50 kHz is filtered. Relatively simple and inexpensive filters are thus sufficient.

The controller used according to the invention can be designed in its monitoring function such that it monitors e.g. the individual switch mode power supplies, reports on the failure of corresponding switch mode power supplies and the location of said switch mode power supplies within the DC voltage converting device and sends an alarm message in case of failure of a predetermined number of switch mode power supplies. The corresponding information of the controller can be transmitted via the coaxial cable connection to the DC voltage source that is located far away, and can be represented there accordingly.

An advantageous embodiment of the invention shall now be explained in more detail in the following with reference to the figures attached to the drawing, in which:

Fig. 1 is a block diagram of an embodiment of the DC voltage converting device according to the invention;

Fig. 2 shows a basic embodiment of a switch mode power supply for use in the DC voltage converting device according to Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 shows a full-bridge push-pull converter as the switch mode power supply

according to Fig. 2; and

Fig. 4 shows a half-bridge push-pull converter as the switch mode power supply according to Fig. 2.

Fig. 1 is a schematic illustration showing an embodiment of the DC voltage converting device 1 according to the invention.

The converting device 1 comprises a plurality of DC converting units 5 in the form of switch mode power supplies 8. These are wired one after the other on the input side and connected to a DC voltage source 2 via a coaxial cable connection 6. The DC voltage source 2 may be arranged at a remote place; the length of the coaxial cable connection 6 may here be several kilometers, for instance 50, 60 or more kilometers.

A filter means 7 is arranged upstream of the DC voltage converting units 5. This means filters, in particular, a frequency range needed for a communication connection to the DC voltage source 2. The filtering operation may e.g. be carried out within a frequency range of up to 50 kHz.

The DC voltage converting units 5 and the corresponding switch mode power supplies 8, respectively, are wired in parallel with one another on their output side and connected accordingly with a cable connection 4. The cable connection 4 leads to at least one electrical consumer 3.

Such an electrical consumer may e.g. be an actuator for a means for controlling a fluid flow into a fluid line or within the fluid line. Such means are e.g. valves, shut-off devices for emergency cases, such as leakage, pipe breakage, or the like, throttles, pumps, etc. These means and the actuators assigned to them are possibly disposed in rough terrain that is difficult to reach. The means and actuators may also be arranged underwater. The fluid can enter into the ducts at a high pressure and be

guided therealong. Moreover, the fluid may be aggressive or pollute the environment, so that a corresponding monitoring and control of the fluid flow is of utmost importance.

The means and the actuators assigned to them, as well as the DC converting device, may be arranged below sea level. The coaxial cable connection can be laid up to the water surface to the corresponding DC voltage source. It is also possible that means and actuators are arranged on the surface of the earth at a place that is difficult to reach, and are controlled and monitored accordingly from a remote place.

A controller 17 is assigned at least to the DC voltage converting device 1 for monitoring, controlling and regulating the corresponding means. This controller can also monitor, control or regulate the electrical consumer(s) 3.

For the transmission of corresponding data to the remote DC voltage source 2 and means further assigned to said source, a data coupling/decoupling means 16 may be provided. This means is arranged upstream the filter means 7 between filter means 7 and DC voltage source 2. Corresponding data signals can be coupled and decoupled, for instance, by the controller 17 into and out of the coaxial cable connection 6 via the data coupling/decoupling means. A communication connection is thereby established between DC voltage source 2 and the means assigned thereto and also the DC voltage converting device 1 and the electrical consumers 3 supplied by the device. The communication connection is bidirectional, so that data can be exchanged in both directions via the coaxial cable connection 6 and with the controller 7.

Fig. 2 is a simplified illustration showing an embodiment of a switch mode power supply 8 for use for the DC voltage converting units 5 according to Fig. 1.

The switch mode power supply 8 is formed by a push-pull converter 9. Said converter is serially connected with further push-pull converters on its input side to corresponding input terminals 26 and 28. The push-pull converter 9 comprises an input capacitor 25 and a transformer 24 which are wired accordingly with the input terminals 26 and 28. The transformer 24 comprises a primary winding and a secondary winding that are coupled magnetically. The primary winding is connected in parallel with the input capacitor 25.

The primary winding is controlled and clocked accordingly via a switching means 11 of the push-pull converter 9. Said switching means 11 is formed by one or several switching transistors, see Figs. 3 and 4. Preferably, such a switching transistor is designed as a power MOSFET, BIMOSFET or thyristor. For the purpose of simplification Fig. 2 shows the switching means 11 symbolically by way of a switch corresponding to four switching transistors and two switching transistors, respectively, in the embodiments shown in Figs. 3 and 4.

The secondary winding is wired via a diode 20 and a load 21 to an output terminal 29. The load 21 may e.g. be an inductor 23, see Figs. 3 and 4. A smoothing capacitor 22 is connected in parallel with the secondary winding.

The output terminal 29 and the corresponding output terminals 29 of the further switch mode power supplies 9 and the push-pull converters 9, respectively, are wired in series with one another and connected to the cable connection 4; see Fig. 1.

The further output terminal 30 on the secondary side of the push-pull converter 9 is wired with the also further output terminals 30 of the other push-pull converters in series with ground 31.

Figs. 3 and 4 show two detailed embodiments of a push-pull converter 9.

The push-pull converter according to Fig. 3 is designed as a full-bridge push-pull converter 10.

In this converter, the switching means 11 is formed by four switching transistors 12, 13, 14 and 15. Two of the switching transistors are respectively combined and serve in pairs to supply the input voltage from the DC voltage source 2 to the primary winding, the pairs of switching transistors being controlled in the push-pull mode. The push-pull mode takes place such that the duty factor of the two pairs is 1:1 each time.

A pulse modulation means 18 is provided for the clocked control of the switching transistors. This means supplies a sequence of pulses that are variable in their width and/or height and/or frequency.

The pulse modulation means 18 is realized by a corresponding electronic circuit that is known per se.

It is possible that the duty factor is changed on the primary side and thus the corresponding output voltage. This takes e.g. place whenever one or several of the push-pull converters 9 have failed. Despite failure of a number of push-pull converters the desired voltage can still be supplied on the output side by the remaining push-pull converters through a corresponding control of the duty factor and an increase in the output voltage of the remaining push-pull converters. To regulate the output voltage, said voltage can be tapped continuously at the output, possibly amplified and supplied to the pulse modulation means via an optocoupler for electrical isolation.

In the further embodiment of the push-pull converter according to Fig. 4, said converter is designed as a half-bridge push-pull converter 19. In this case,

essentially two switches are formed by a switching transistor. These switch the primary winding to the input voltage alternatingly in push-pull mode and non-overlapping fashion. The corresponding diodes on the output side are also conductive in alternating fashion.

The transformer 24 operates without direct current because of the symmetrical operation. This, however, is only the case if the ON periods of the switching transistors are exactly the same. This can be accomplished through a corresponding control by the pulse modulation means 18, which is not shown in Figs. 2 and 4 for the sake of simplification.

CLAIMS

1. A DC voltage converting device which on the input side is connected to a DC voltage source and, on the output side, supplies a converted DC voltage to at least one electrical consumer via a cable connection, characterized in that the DC voltage converting device comprises a plurality of DC voltage converting units of which each is serially connected to the DC voltage source on the input side and connected in parallel with the cable connection on the output side for supplying the converted DC voltage to the at least one electrical consumer,

wherein the plurality of DC voltage converting units are clocked in phase-shifted fashion relative to one another.

2. A DC voltage converting device which on the input side is connected to a DC voltage source and, on the output side, supplies a converted DC voltage to at least one electrical consumer via a cable connection, characterized in that the DC voltage device comprises a plurality of DC voltage converting units of which each is serially connected to the DC voltage source on the input side and connected in parallel with the cable connection on the output side for supplying the converted DC voltage to the at least one electrical consumer, characterized in that a DC voltage from the DC voltage source in the order of about 1kV to 10kV.

3. A DC voltage converting device which on the input side is connected to a DC voltage source and, on the output side, supplies a converted DC voltage to at least one electrical consumer via a cable connection, characterized in that the DC voltage converting device comprises a plurality of DC voltage converting units of which each is serially connected to the DC voltage source on the input side and connected in parallel with the cable connection on the output side for supplying the converted DC voltage to the at least one electrical consumer, characterized in that the DC voltage converting device is connected via a coaxial cable connection to the DC voltage source.

4. A DC voltage converting device according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the DC voltage converting device comprises a filter means connected upstream thereof on the input side of the DC voltage converting units, the filter being configured to filter a frequency range up to 50kHz.

5. A DC voltage converting device according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the DC voltage converting unit is designed as a clocked switch mode power supply clocked at a rate greater than 50 kHz.

5 6. A DC voltage converting device according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the switch mode power supply is primarily clocked at a rate between 50 kHz and 300 kHz.

7. A DC voltage converting device according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the switch mode power supply is designed as a push-pull converter having an output voltage
10 supplied to a pulse width modulator.

8. A DC voltage converting device according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the switch mode power supply is designed as a full-bridge push-pull converter having an inductive
15 load on the output side.

9. A DC voltage converting device according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the switch mode power supply as switching means comprises two or more switching transistors, in a push-pull configuration, the switching transistors selected from the group consisting of power MOSFET transistors and BIMOSFET transistors and wherein the switching transistors are directly
20 connected to a primary side of a transformer of the switch mode power supply.

10. A DC voltage converting device according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the switching transistors are clocked in push-pull fashion at a clock ratio of 1:1.

25 11. A DC voltage converting device according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the switch mode power supplies of the DC voltage converting device are clocked in synchronism.

12. A DC voltage converting device according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the switch mode power supplies of the DC voltage converting device are clocked in phase-shifted
30 fashion relative to one another.

13. A DC voltage converting device according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that a phase shift during the clocking of neighboring switch mode power supplies comprises a phase shift of $1/n$ if n is the number of the switch mode power supplies of the DC voltage converting device.
- 5 14. A DC voltage converting device according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that a data coupling/decoupling means is arranged upstream of the filter means in the direction of the DC voltage source.
- 10 15. A DC voltage converting device according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in a controller is assigned at least to the DC voltage converting device and the components thereof.
16. A DC voltage converting device according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the clock frequency of the switch mode power supply is within the range of 10 kHz to more than one 1 MHz and, in particular, within the range of 50 kHz to 300 kHz.
- 15 17. A DC voltage converting device according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that each switch mode power supply is readjustable in its output voltage, in particular in case of failure of another switch mode power supply of the DC voltage converting device.
- 20 18. A DC voltage converting device according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the duty factor of the switching transistors is variable for readjusting the output voltage of a switch mode power supply in response to a failure of another switch mode power supply.
- 25 19. A DC voltage converting device according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the switch mode power supply for the clocked control of the switching means comprises a pulse modulation means which output a sequence of variable pulses for clocking the one or more switching transistors.
20. A system for supplying power to an electrical device, the system comprising:
- 30 a DC source;
- a plurality of DC/DC converters, wherein inputs of the DC/DC converters are connected to the DC source via an electrical conductor and wherein outputs of the DC/DC converters provide a converted DC voltage to the electrical device,

wherein the plurality of DC/DC converters receive a high DC voltage from the DC source via the electrical conductor and convert the high DC voltage to a lower DC voltage using only environment cooling.

- 5 21. The system of claim 20 further comprising a controller coupled to each of the DC/DC converters to regulate one or more functions of each DC/DC converter and to specifically identify failed DC/DC converters.
22. The system of claim 21 wherein the controller is coupled to the electrical device to regulate one
10 or more functions of the electrical device.
23. The system of claim 22 further comprising a data coupling device coupled to the electrical conductor and the controller, wherein the data coupling device is operable to decouple data from the electrical device and provide the data to the controller while power is supplied to the electrical device.
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24. The system of claim 23 wherein the data coupling device couples data from the controller to the electrical conductor while power is supplied to the electrical device.
25. The system of claim 22 wherein the controller detects a failure of a DC/DC converter and
20 causes other DC/DC converters to compensate for the failed DC/DC converter.
26. The system of claim 21 wherein the controller independently controls an output power of each DC/DC converter.
- 25 27. The system of claim 20 wherein the DC/DC converters are in a spaced relationship with each other such that heat from the DC/DC converters is dissipated without the cooling mechanism.
28. The system of claim 26 wherein each DC/DC converter comprises a switching mechanism that permits the output power of each DC/DC converter to be controlled using a pulse width modulated
30 signal.
29. The system of claim 24 wherein the data decoupled from the electrical conductor is used to control the electrical device.

30. The system of claim 24 wherein the data coupled to the electrical conductor is used to monitor the electrical device.

31. The system of claim 24 wherein the data coupled to the electrical conductor is used to monitor the DC/DC converters.

32. The system of claim 20 further comprising a filter coupled between the DC source and the DC/DC converters, wherein a frequency range up to 50 kHz is filtered by a filter.

33. The system of claim 20 wherein the electrical device is an actuator to control a fluid flow in a fluid line.

34. The system of claim 20 wherein the electrical conductor is a coaxial cable.

35. The system of claim 34 wherein the electrical conductor is under water and has a length up to 60 kilometers.

36. The system of claim 35 wherein the electrical conductor is at least two kilometers in length.

37. A system for supplying power from a sea surface to a subsea location, the system comprising:
a DC source for disposal at the sea surface;
a subsea electrical device; and
a plurality of DC voltage converters for disposal subsea, each having an input side connected to the DC source via an electrical conductor and an output side connected to the subsea electrical device.

38. The system of claim 37 wherein the electrical conductor extends subsea to the subsea electrical device and wherein the electrical conductor has a small cross-section designated to support up to 10 kV of DC voltage and at least 3 amperes of current.

39. The system of claim 37 wherein a frequency filter is placed between the DC source and the input side of each DC voltage converter to filter a frequency range up to 50 kHz.

40. The system of claim 37 wherein the DC converters are in a spaced relationship with each other such that heat from the DC converters is dissipated without the need of a cooling component.

5 41. The system of claim 37 further including a controller which detects a failure of a DC converter and causes other DC converters to compensate for the failed DC converter.

42. A system for supplying power to a remote electrical device, the system comprising:

a DC source;

10 a plurality of DC voltage converters each having an input serially connected to the DC source and each having an output connected in parallel to the remote electrical device via a conductor,

wherein the length of the conductor is at least two kilometers.

15 43. A system for supply power to an electrical device, comprising:

a DC source; and

a plurality of DC voltage converters each having an input serially connected to the DC source and each having an output connected in parallel to the electrical device via a conductor,
20 wherein at least some of the DC voltage converters are configured to provide different output voltages.

44. The system of claim 43 wherein at least some of the DC voltage converters have different constructions for providing the different output voltages.

25 45. A system for supplying voltage from a surface of the sea to a remote subsea location, the system comprising:

a DC voltage source at the surface that supplies a first DC voltage;

a subsea cable extending through the sea to conduct said first DC voltage;

30 a plurality of underwater DC voltage converting units serially connected on an input side to the subsea cable, the plurality of underwater DC voltage converting units convert the first DC voltage to a second DC voltage for output to an underwater actuator controlling fluid flow through a fluid line.