

Fixed Frequency Series-Parallel Mode (SPM) Active Clamp Flyback Converter

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) to U.S. Provisional Application Ser. No. 62/384,244, entitled “Fixed Frequency Series-Parallel Mode (SPM) Active Clamp Flyback Converter”, Attorney docket number P32298USP1 (119-1267USP1), filed on September 7, 2016, the contents of which is herein incorporated by reference.

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0002] This disclosure relates generally to the field of power converters, and in particular, to flyback converters with a series-parallel mode (SPM) active clamp circuit.

BACKGROUND

[0003] Flyback converter is one of the most common types of power converters in low-power, switched-mode power supplies. They are widely used in, e.g., electronic gadgets, cell phones, notebook computers, and/or other types of consumer electronics, especially when galvanic isolation is needed between input power source(s) and output load(s). A flyback converter may comprise a primary coil and a secondary coil, which are electromagnetically coupled with each other. By controlling the flow of current through the primary coil using a switch (a metal oxide semiconductor field-effect transistor (MOSFET), for example), energy may be transferred from the power source (coupled to the primary coil) to the load (coupled to the secondary coil).

[0004] In practice, the primary and secondary coils may have an associated parasitic leakage inductance that also captures energy. The leakage inductance may cause additional losses unless its

leakage energy is recovered. For consumer electronics, especially battery operated electronics, the energy recovery may become even more important because of limited power availability and thermal management challenges in miniaturized electronics. Another practical challenge is the mitigation of electromagnetic interference (EMI). Flyback converters, being operated by turning on and off switches, may generate EMI. Specific features in consumer electronics may place EMI constraints on a power supply of such device. For example, the "Multi-Touch" technology used with touch screens may demand low common-mode noise within specific frequency band(s). Such requirements may require flyback converters to be operated at appropriate fixed switching frequencies. Therefore, the inventor has recognized the need for a flyback converter capable of recovering the leakage energy in high efficiency and operable with fixed switching frequencies.

SUMMARY

[0005] Disclosed herein is a flyback converter with a series-parallel mode (SPM) active clamp circuit. In some embodiments, the flyback converter may comprise electromagnetically coupled primary and secondary coils. By using a first switch (for example, a MOSFET) the flyback converter may transfer energy from a power source (coupled to the primary coil) to a load (coupled to the secondary coil). In some embodiments, the flyback converter may also comprise an active clamp circuit coupled in parallel with the primary coil. The active clamp circuit may include multiple networks in parallel. The first network of the active clamp circuit may include a second switch (for example, a second MOSFET), one or more snubber capacitors, and one or more diodes, which may be configured to absorb and retain the leakage energy from the leakage inductance of the flyback converter. The second network of the active clamp circuit may include a third switch (for example, a third MOSFET) and a diode, which may be configured to (1) create a circulating circuit for the flow of current through the primary coil in a reverse direction and (2) clamp the current to a threshold level. With the active clamp circuit, the flyback converter may first re-capture the leakage energy in the active clamp circuit and then recover it back to the power source.

Additionally, in some embodiments, the active clamp circuit may also facilitate zero-voltage switching (ZVS), for example, for the first and second switches at turning-on, which may further improve the flyback converter's efficiency.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0006] Various embodiments of the disclosed concepts are illustrated by way of example and not by way of limitation in the accompanying drawings in which like references indicate similar elements. It should be noted that references to “an”, “one” or “another” embodiment in this disclosure are not necessarily to the same or different embodiment, and they mean at least one. In order to be concise, a given figure may be used to illustrate the features of more than one embodiment, or more than one species of the disclosure, and not all elements in the figure may be required for a given embodiment or species.

[0007] FIG. 1 is schematic diagram illustrating exemplary SPM active clamp flyback converter **100** in accordance with one embodiment.

[0008] FIG. 2 illustrates the flow of current through the primary coil of exemplary flyback converter **100** in Operational Stage I in accordance with one embodiment.

[0009] FIG. 3 illustrates the flow of current through the primary coil of exemplary flyback converter **100** in Operational Stage II in accordance with one embodiment.

[0010] FIG. 4 illustrates the flow of current through the primary coil and a first snubber capacitor of exemplary flyback converter **100** in Operational Stage III in accordance with one embodiment.

[0011] FIG. 5 illustrates the flow of current through the primary coil and a second snubber capacitor of exemplary flyback converter **100** in Operational Stage III in accordance with one embodiment.

[0012] FIG. 6 illustrates the flow of current through the primary coil of exemplary flyback converter **100** in Operational Stage IV in accordance with one embodiment.

[0013] FIG. 7 illustrates the flow of current through the primary coil of exemplary flyback converter **100** in Operational Stage V in accordance with one embodiment.

[0014] FIG. 8 illustrates waveforms of the voltage across the first switch, the current through the primary coil, and control signals of exemplary flyback converter **100** in Operational Stages I–V in accordance with one embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0015] In the following description, for purposes of explanation, numerous specific details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the disclosed concepts. As part of this description, some of this disclosure's drawings represent structures and devices in block diagram form in order to avoid obscuring the disclosure. In the interest of clarity, not all features of an actual implementation are described in this disclosure. Moreover, the language used in this disclosure has been principally selected for readability and instructional purposes, and may not have been selected to delineate or circumscribe the disclosed subject matter, resort to the claims being necessary to determine such disclosed subject matter.

[0016] FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram illustrating exemplary series-parallel mode (“SPM”) active clamp flyback converter **100** in accordance with one embodiment. Flyback converter **100** may include primary coil P1 **105** and secondary coil S1 **110**, which may be electromagnetically coupled with each other. Primary coil P1 **105** may receive an input voltage V_{IN} from power source **115**, while secondary coil S1 **110** may supply an output voltage V_{OUT} to load **120** (for example, resistor R_{LOAD}) through diode D4 **130**, as shown in FIG. 1. To simplify explanations, it may be assumed that primary coil P1 **105** and secondary coil S1 **110** possess an ideal electromagnetic coupling, meaning a flow of current through

primary coil P1 **105** may transfer the complete energy stored in primary coil P1 **105** to secondary coil S1 **110**. Leakage inductance of flyback converter **100**, including leakage inductance of primary coil P1 **105** and/or secondary coil S1 **110**, may be represented by leakage inductance L1 **135**, as shown in FIG. **1**. Leakage inductance L1 **135** may capture a leakage energy that is not transferred from the primary coil to the secondary coil.

[0017] Flyback converter **100** may further comprise switch Q1 **125**, for example, a first MOSFET, coupled in series between power source **115** and primary coil P1 **105**. Also, flyback converter **100** may include snubber network **180** and reverse circulating network **185**, each of which may be coupled in parallel with primary coil P1 **105** (and leakage inductance L1 **135**) and two of which may form an active clamp circuit. In one embodiment, snubber network **180** may comprise switch Q3 **140**, for example, a second MOSFET, in series with snubber capacitors C1 **145** and C2 **150**, and diode D1 **155**. A second diode D2 **160** may be coupled in parallel across snubber capacitor C2 **150** and diode D1 **155**, and a third diode D3 **165** may be coupled in parallel across snubber capacitor C1 **145** and diode D1 **155**. Reverse circulating network **185** may include switch Q2 **170**, for example, a third MOSFET, in series with diode D5 **175**. Operation of snubber network **180** and reverse circulating network **185** as an active clamp circuit will be described in further detail below. Flyback converter **100** may also include controller **190**, which may be coupled to switches Q1 **125**, Q2 **170** and Q3 **140** and generate controls signals for the switches, respectively. Flyback converter **100** may further include an optional diode D6 **190**, which couples snubber network **180** with reverse circulating network **185**. Referring to FIG. **1**, diode D6 **190** may be coupled between the drains of switches Q3 **140** (of snubber network **180**) and Q2 **170** (of reverse circulating network **185**). The purpose and functionality of optional diode D6 **190** will be described in the following sections.

[0018] FIG. **1** also depicts gate drive circuits for switch Q1 **125** (comprising voltage source V1 and resistor R1), switch Q2 **170** (comprising voltage source V2 and resistor R2), and switch Q3 **140**

(comprising voltage source V3 and resistor R3), respectively. Note that switches Q1 **125**, Q2 **170** and Q3 **140** may each comprise an intrinsic anti-parallel body diode and a parallel effective capacitance, which are not shown in FIG. **1**. As an alternative to MOSFETs, flyback converter **100** may use other types of switches, for example, insulated gate bipolar transistors (IGBTs), junction gate field-effect transistors (JFETs), and silicon carbide and/or gallium nitride devices. Note that instead of using diode D4 **130**, flyback converter **100** may use other types of switches, for example, a MOSFET, to provide synchronous rectification.

[0019] Operations of flyback converter **100** may be explained in sequential Operational Stages I–V, which are schematically illustrated in FIGs. **2–7**. FIG. **2** illustrates operations of flyback converter **100** in Operational Stage I. In Operational Stage I, flyback converter **100** may turn on (or close) switch Q1 **125**, for example, by a first control signal with a fixed frequency, and maintain switches Q2 **170** and Q3 **140** off, by using controller **190** of flyback converter **100**. When switch Q1 **125** is closed, current will flow from power source **115** through primary coil P1 **105**, through switch Q1 **125**, as illustrated by lines **205–230**. The current flowing through primary coil P1 **105** is hereinafter referred to as the primary current I_{P1} . As the primary current I_{P1} in primary coil P1 **105** builds up, the induced voltage across the secondary coil S1 **110** may place diode D4 **130** into reverse bias, thus blocking a flow of current from secondary coil S1 **110** to load **120**. Because energy is not being transferred to the secondary coil, the energy delivered by power source **115** may be accumulated (or stored) in primary coil P1 **105**. Further, as the primary current I_{P1} also flows through leakage inductance L1 **135**, leakage inductance L1 **135** may store a leakage energy.

[0020] FIG. **3** illustrates operations of flyback converter **100** in Operational Stage II. In Operational Stage II, by using controller **190**, flyback converter **100** may turn off (or open) switch Q1 **125**, and after a first delay, turn on switches Q3 **140** and Q2 **170**, for example, by a second and third control signals with respective fixed frequencies. The first delay may be inserted to facilitate zero voltage

switching ("ZVS"), for example, turning-on under zero voltage, for switch Q3 **140**, as well as prevent occurrences of short-circuit faults through the switches. In Operational Stage II, the primary current I_{P1} through primary coil P1 **105** may decline as the primary coil has been disconnected from power source **115** by turning off switch Q1 **125**. This may generate an induced voltage across secondary coil S1 **110** that causes diode D3 **130** to become forward biased and begin to conduct, thus delivering the stored energy from primary coil P1 **105** to secondary coil S1 **110** and load **120**. Meanwhile, after switch Q1 **125** is turned off but before switch Q3 **140** is turned on (i.e., during the first delay), the primary current I_{P1} may be forced to flow through the body diode (not shown) of switch Q3 **140** and diode D1 **155** into snubber capacitors C1 **145** and C2 **150**, as indicated by lines **305–320**. Snubber capacitors C1 **145** and C2 **150** may be charged in series, and the leakage energy may be transferred from leakage inductance L1 **135** to the two snubber capacitors. Note that flyback converter **100** may further include optional diode D6 **190**, and first turn on switch Q3 **140** and then switch Q2 **170** to achieve ZVS for switch Q2 **170**. For example, after switch Q3 **140** is closed, it may create an approximately zero voltage across switch Q3 **140**. Through diode D6 **190**, it may clamp the voltage across switch Q2 **170** (between switch Q2 **170**'s drain and source) to approximately zero as well. Therefore, flyback converter **100** may turn on switch Q2 **170** at ZVS. When Q2 **170** turns on, the energy stored in the parasitic capacitance of its output capacitance (not shown) may dissipate in switch Q2 **170** as turn-on power loss. Optional diode D6 **190** may ensure that the energy stored in this capacitance is recovered when leakage energy is transferred to snubber capacitors C1 **145** and C2 **150**.

[0021] During the first delay, the body diode of switch Q3 **140** may conduct, which may bring down the voltage across switch Q3 **140** to approximately zero. Thus, flyback converter **100** may turn on switch Q3 **140** under zero voltage, e.g., after the first delay. Meanwhile, flyback converter **100** may also turn on switch Q2 **170**. The ZVS may further reduce losses and improve flyback converter **100**'s efficiency. Once switches Q3 **140** and Q2 **170** are closed, the primary current I_{P1} may change from flowing through the body diode of switch Q3 **140** to flowing through switch Q3 **140** itself, thus continuously

charging snubber capacitors C1 **145** and C2 **150**. The total stored energy in snubber capacitors C1 **145** and C2 **150** may depend on the snubber capacitors' respective voltages. In particular, the energy may be determined according to equation (1):

$$E_{snubber} = 0.5 \times [Cap_1 \times V_{C1}^2 + Cap_2 \times V_{C2}^2] \quad (1)$$

where Cap_1 and Cap_2 are the respective capacitances of snubber capacitors C1 **145** and C2 **150**, and V_{C1} and V_{C2} are the respective voltages across snubber capacitors C1 **145** and C2 **150**.

[0022] The voltages V_{C1} and V_{C2} of snubber capacitors C1 **145** and C2 **150** may be determined by the reflected output voltage V_{OR} across primary coil P1 **105** and an induced leakage voltage V_{L1} across leakage inductance L1 **135**. To simplify explanations, snubber capacitors C1 **145** and C2 **150** may be assumed to have equal capacitances. Thereby, each snubber capacitors C1 **145** and C2 **150** may be charged to half of the reflected output voltage V_{OR} , plus half of the induced leakage voltage V_{L1} (e.g., $V_{C1} = V_{C2} = 0.5 \times (V_{OR} + V_{L1})$). The reflected output voltage V_{OR} across primary coil P1 **105** may be determined by equation (2):

$$V_{OR} = (V_{OUT} + V_{f_D4}) \times (N_p/N_s) \quad (2)$$

where V_{OUT} is the output voltage of flyback converter **100**, V_{f_D4} is the forward voltage drop across diode D4 **130**, and N_p/N_s represents the turns-ratio between primary coil P1 **105** and secondary coil S1 **110**. For example, if flyback converter **100** converts 300V input voltage (e.g., $V_{IN} = 300V$) to 5V voltage (e.g., $V_{OUT} = 5V$), the turns-ratio N_p/N_s between the primary and secondary coils is 14:1, and the forward voltage drop across diode D4 **130** is 0.7V, the reflected output voltage V_{OR} may be $(5 + 0.7) \times 14 = 79.8V$. Each snubber capacitor C1 **145** and C2 **150** may be charged, for example, at least to a voltage equal to half of the reflected voltage V_{OR} , and may be further charged higher by absorbing the leakage energy from leakage inductance L1 **135**. In the above example, if each snubber capacitor C1 **145** and C2 **150** is charged to 50V, then the charge corresponding to 40V (i.e., $79.8/2 \cong 40V$) is due to reflected output

voltage V_{OR} and the charge of additional 10V (to reach 50V level) is due to half of the leakage energy. The reflected output voltage V_{OR} may remain substantially constant because flyback converter **100**'s output voltage V_{OUT} may be regulated to a constant level under different loading conditions, while the induced leakage voltage V_{L1} may increase and/or decrease with the loading condition of flyback converter **100**.

[0023] Once the leakage energy of leakage inductance L1 **135** is transferred to the series combination of snubber capacitors C1 **145** and C2 **150**, diode D1 **155** may block a flow of current in the reverse direction. Further, since the respective voltages V_{C1} and V_{C2} of snubber capacitors C1 **145** and C2 **150** are less than the total voltage V_{TOTAL} across primary coil P1 **105** and leakage inductance L1 **135** (e.g., $V_{TOTAL} = V_{OR} + V_{L1}$), diodes D2 **160** and D3 **165** may become reverse biased. Snubber capacitors C1 **145** and C2 **150** may thus be disconnected from primary coil P1 **105**, which causes C1 **145** and C2 **150** to retain the leakage energy that they absorbed from leakage inductance L1 **135**. Note that the positive polarity of the voltages V_{C1} and V_{C2} is from bottom end to top end of each snubber capacitor C1 **145** and C2 **150**, which aligns with the direction of primary current I_{P1} that charges the two snubber capacitors in series. Accordingly, the voltage V_{Q1} across switch Q1 **125** may become the sum of the voltages V_{C1} , V_{C2} , and input voltage V_{IN} , for example, $V_{Q1} = V_{C1} + V_{C2} + V_{IN} \cong 400V$ by using the exemplary numerical values given above.

[0024] When the energy of primary coil P1 **105** is depleted and transferred to the secondary coil, primary coil P1 **105** may resonate with the effective capacitance (not shown) of switch Q1 **125** with minimum losses, which may cause the voltage potential at switch Q1 **125**'s drain node **350** to fall. When the total voltage V_{TOTAL} across primary coil P1 **105** and leakage inductance L1 **135** falls below the respective voltages V_{C1} and V_{C2} of snubber capacitors C1 **145** and C2 **150**, diodes D2 **160** and D3 **165** may become forward biased and begin to conduct. Further, if the voltages V_{C1} and V_{C2} are equal, diodes

D2 **160** and D3 **165** may begin to conduct at about the same time. Flyback converter **100** may thus move into Operational Stage III, as illustrated in FIGS. **4** and **5**.

[0025] Referring to FIGS. **4** and **5**, because switch Q3 **140** remains closed, snubber capacitors C1 **145** and C2 **150** may reconnect with primary coil P1 **105** in parallel. The two snubber capacitors may transfer their stored leakage energy to primary P1 **105** (in a resonant manner with minimum losses), thereby generating a reverse primary current I_{P1} , as indicated by lines **405–440** in FIG. **4** and **505–530** in FIG. **5**. Because snubber capacitors C1 **145** and C2 **150** are in parallel, the voltage V_{Q1} across switch Q1 **125** may become the sum of voltage V_{C1} (or V_{C2} if V_{C2} equals to V_{C1}) and input voltage V_{IN} , for example, $V_{Q1} = V_{C1} + V_{IN} \cong 350V$ by using the exemplary numerical values given above. Note that optional diode D6 **190** may block the reverse primary current I_{P1} flowing from snubber network **180** into reverser circulating network **185**.

[0026] When the reverse primary current I_{P1} reaches a predetermined threshold level, flyback converter **100** may turn off switch Q3 **140** and move into Operational Stage VI, as shown in FIG. **6**. As switch Q2 **170** still remains closed, switch Q2 **170** and diode D5 **175** may create a circulating circuit for the reverse primary current I_{P1} , as shown by lines **605–620**. The resistivity of the circulating circuit of switch Q2 **170**, D5 **175**, primary coil P1 **105** and leakage inductance L1 **135** may be configured to be small. Thus, the amplitude of the reverse primary current I_{P1} may be clamped at or marginally below the predetermined threshold level. Additionally, as switch Q2 **170** and diode D5 **175** may generate only small voltage drops, the voltage V_{Q1} across switch Q1 **125** may approximately equal to input voltage V_{IN} , for example, $V_{Q1} \cong V_{IN} = 300V$ by using the exemplary numerical values given above.

[0027] FIG. **7** illustrates the Operational Stage V of flyback converter **100**. In Operational Stage V, flyback converter **100** may turn off switch Q2 **170**, and after a second delay, turn on switch Q1 **125**. The second delay may be inserted to facilitate ZVS, for example, turning-on under zero voltage, for switch Q1 **125**, as well as prevent occurrences of short-circuit faults through the switches. In Operational Stage

V, the reverse primary current I_{P1} may be directed to flow through the effective capacitance of switch Q1 **125** (not shown), because switch Q2 **170** is turned off. Primary coil P1 **105**, leakage inductance L1 **135**, and the effective capacitance of switch Q1 **125** may operate in a resonant manner with minimum losses, causing the voltage potential at switch Q1 **125**'s drain node **350** to fall towards zero. As the voltage potential of drain node **350** reduces, the body diode of switch Q1 **125** (not shown) may begin to conduct. The conduction of the body diode may cause the voltage V_{Q1} across switch Q1 **125** to fall to approximately zero. Therefore, flyback converter **100** may turn on switch Q1 **125** under a zero-voltage condition, e.g., after the second delay. The ZVS may further reduce losses and improve flyback converter **100**'s efficiency. Once switch Q1 **125** is closed, the reverse primary current I_{P1} of primary coil P1 **105** may flow into power source **105**, as illustrated by lines **705–730** in FIG. **7**, thus recovering the leakage energy stored in primary coil P1 **105** back to power source **115**.

[0028] As may now be better understood with reference to FIGS. **1–7**, snubber network **180** may use snubber capacitors C1 **145** and C2 **150** to absorb and retain the leakage energy released from leakage inductance L1 **135**, while reverse circulating network **185** may create a circulating circuit to clamp the reverse primary current of primary coil P1 **105** to a threshold level. Next, when both of the networks are disconnected from primary coil P1 **105** by using switches Q3 **140** and Q2 **170**, flyback converter **100** may recover the leakage energy back to power source **115**.

[0029] FIG. **8** depicts, from top to bottom, time-domain waveforms of voltage V_{Q1} of switch Q1 **125**, primary current I_{P1} through primary coil P1 **105**, the second control signal V_{gs_Q3} of switch Q3 **140**, the third control signal V_{gs_Q2} of switch Q2 **170**, and the first control signal V_{gs_Q1} of switch Q1 **125**, in correspondence with the above-described Operational Stages I–V:

- In Operational Stage I, the first control signal V_{gs_Q1} may be asserted (e.g., to a valid high level), as shown by waveform **825**, which may turn on switch Q1 **125**. In reference to the descriptions in FIG. **2**, the primary current I_{P1} may increase as illustrated by waveform **810**, and the voltage V_{Q1} of switch Q1 **125**

may become a low voltage drop during conduction as depicted by waveform **805**. Energy is transferred from power source **115**, and stored in primary coil P1 **105** and leakage inductance L1 **135**.

- In Operational Stage II, the first control signal V_{gs_Q1} may be de-asserted (e.g., to a valid low level), as shown by waveform **825**, which may turn off switch Q1 **125**. Accordingly, the primary current I_{P1} may start to decline as illustrated by waveform **810**. After a first delay, the second and third control signals V_{gs_Q3} and V_{gs_Q2} may be asserted, as shown by waveforms **815** and **820**, respectively, thus turning on switches Q3 **140** at ZVS and Q2 **170**. In reference to the descriptions in FIG. **3**, stored energy of primary coil P1 **105** may be delivered to the secondary coil S1 **110** and load **120**, while leakage energy of leakage inductance L1 **135** may be transferred to and retained by snubber capacitors C1 **145** and C2 **150** in series mode. Accordingly, the voltage V_{Q1} across switch Q1 **125** may reach the sum of input voltage V_{IN} and voltages across snubber capacitors C1 **145** and C2 **150**, for example, $V_{Q1} = V_{C1} + V_{C2} + V_{IN} \cong 400V$ by using the exemplary numerical values given above, as indicated by the sloping, flat area **830** in waveform **805**.

- In Operational Stage III, when the energy of primary coil P1 **105** is depleted, diodes D2 **160** and D3 **165** may begin to conduct, thus allowing snubber capacitors C1 **145** and C2 **150** to transfer the leakage energy that they absorbed in Operational Stage II to primary coil P1 **105**. In reference to the descriptions in FIGS. **4** and **5**, snubber capacitors C1 **145** and C2 **150** may, in parallel, charge primary P1 **105** in a resonant manner with minimum losses and generate a reverse primary current I_{P1} , as indicated by waveform **810**, for example, primary current I_{P1} may become negative. Accordingly, the voltage V_{Q1} across switch Q1 **125** may become the sum of voltage V_{C1} (or V_{C2} if V_{C2} equals to V_{C1}) and input voltage V_{IN} , for example, $V_{Q1} = V_{C1} + V_{IN} \cong 350V$ by using the exemplary numerical values given above, as indicated by the sloping, flat area **835** in waveform **805**.

- In Operational Stage IV, when the stored leakage energy in snubber capacitors C1 **145** and C2 **150** have been transferred to primary coil P1 **105**, the second control signal V_{gs_Q3} may be de-asserted,

as shown by waveform **815**, which may turn off switch Q3 **140**. In reference to the descriptions in FIG. **6**, the reverse primary current I_{P1} may be directed to circulate through switch Q2 **170** and diode **175**. As the resistivity of the circulating circuit may be configured to be small, the reverse primary current I_{P1} may be held nearly flat, as shown in waveform **810**. Accordingly, as switch Q2 **170** and diode D5 **175** may generate small voltage drops during conduction, the voltage V_{Q1} across switch Q1 **125** may drop to input voltage V_{IN} , for example, $V_{Q1} \equiv V_{IN} = 300V$ by using the exemplary numerical values given above, as indicated by the sloping, flat area **840**.

- In Operational Stage V, the third control signal V_{gs_Q2} may be de-asserted, as shown by waveform **820**, which may turn off switch Q2 **170**. In reference to the descriptions in FIG. **7**, the reverse primary current I_{P1} may be directed to flow through the effective capacitance of switch Q1 **125**, in a resonant manner with minimum losses, causing the voltage potential at switch Q1 **125**'s drain node **350** to fall towards zero. The reverse primary current I_{P1} of primary coil P1 **105** may flow into power source **105**, thus recovering the leakage energy from primary coil P1 **105** back to power source **115**. Note that the exemplary numerical values used in above descriptions are for purposes of illustration only, and that other flyback converter configurations, input voltages, output voltages, turns-ratio and/or diode forward voltage drop may be used.

[0030] In reference to the waveforms in FIG. **8**, it may now be better understood that flyback converter **100** may operate switches Q1 **125** and Q2 **170** at fixed frequencies complementarily with each other with the first and second delays, as shown by waveforms **820** and **825**. Flyback converter **100** may turn on switch Q3 **140** with switch Q2 **170** and turn off switch Q3 **140** when the reverse primary current I_{P1} reaches the threshold level, as shown by waveforms **815** and **810**. The increasing rate of reverse primary current I_{P1} may depend on the leakage energy stored in and delivered by snubber capacitors C1 **145** and C2 **150**, which is further based on the loading condition of flyback converter **100**. Thereby, switch Q3 **140**'s turn off time may vary. If flyback converter **100** does not include reverse circulating network **185**,

which comprises switch Q2 **170** and D5 **175**, flyback converter **100** may have to turn on switch Q1 **125** sooner, for example, after a delay once switch Q3 **140** is opened, thus causing both switches Q1 **125** and Q3 **140** to be operated at variable frequencies. Alternatively, flyback converter **100** may still control switch Q1 **125** at a fixed frequency but may have to maintain switch Q3 **140** on until the next switching cycle of switch Q1 **125** in order to provide conduction for the reverse primary current I_{P1} . This may cause continuous rising of reverse primary current I_{P1} and end up with a much larger reverse current. Hence, with reverse circulating network **185** formed by switch Q2 **170** and D5 **175**, flyback converter **100** may sustain the fixed frequency operation of switch Q1 **125** and meanwhile clamp the reverse primary current I_{P1} to a threshold level.

[0031] The various embodiments described above are provided by way of illustration only and should not be constructed to limit the scope of the disclosure. Various modifications and changes can be made to the principles and embodiments herein without departing from the scope of the disclosure and without departing from the scope of the claims.

CLAIMS

1. A power conversion apparatus, comprising:
 - a primary coil configured to receive an input voltage;
 - a secondary coil electromagnetically coupled to the primary coil and configured to provide an output voltage;
 - a first switch coupled to the primary coil and configured to control a flow of current through the primary coil based on a first control signal;
 - a second switch configured to control, based on a second control signal, a flow of current through a snubber network of an active clamp circuit, the snubber network coupled in parallel with the primary coil and configured to absorb a leakage energy from a leakage inductance associated with the primary coil and the secondary coil;
 - a third switch configured to control, based on a third control signal, a flow of current through a reverse circulating network of the active clamp circuit, the reverse circulating network coupled in parallel with the primary coil and configured to clamp the current through the primary coil in a reverse direction to a threshold level; and
 - a controller coupled to the first, the second and the third switches, the controller configured to generate the first, the second and the third control signals.
2. The power conversion apparatus of claim 1, wherein the snubber network of the active clamp circuit further comprises a first and a second capacitors coupled in series with the second switch.
3. The power conversion apparatus of claim 2, wherein the snubber network of the active clamp circuit further comprises a first diode coupled in series with the second switch, whereby the first diode is configured to retain the absorbed leakage energy in the first and second capacitors by disconnecting the first and second capacitors from the primary coil.
4. The power conversion apparatus of claim 3, wherein the snubber network of the active clamp circuit further comprises a second diode coupled in parallel with the first capacitor and the first diode, whereby the second diode is configured to conduct a discharging current of the second capacitor.

5. The power conversion apparatus of claim 3, wherein the snubber network of the active clamp circuit further comprises a third diode coupled in parallel with the second capacitor and the first diode, whereby the third diode is configured to conduct a discharging current of the first capacitor.
6. The power conversion apparatus of claim 1, wherein the reverse circulating network of the active clamp circuit further comprises a fourth diode coupled in series with the third switch.
7. The power conversion apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first control signal is generated to achieve zero voltage switching of the first switch.
8. The power conversion apparatus of claim 1, wherein the second control signal is generated to achieve zero voltage switching of the second switch.
9. The power conversion apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a diode configured to achieve zero voltage switching of the third switch, the diode coupled between the snubber network and the reverse circulating network.
10. A method for operating a power conversion apparatus, the power conversion apparatus comprising a primary and a secondary coils, the primary coil configured to receive an input voltage, the secondary coil electromagnetically coupled with the primary coil and configured to provide an output voltage, the method comprising:
 - generating, with a controller, a first, a second and a third control signals;
 - controlling, with a first switch and based on the first control signal, a flow of current through the primary coil in a forward direction;
 - controlling, with a second switch and based on the second control signal, a flow of current in a reverse direction through the primary coil and a snubber network of an active clamp circuit so as to recover an absorbed leakage energy until the flow of current in the reverse direction reaches a threshold level; and
 - controlling, with a third switch and based on the third control signal, a flow of current through a reverse circulating network of the active clamp circuit coupled in parallel with the primary coil so as to clamp the current through the primary coil in the reverse direction to the threshold level.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the snubber network of the active clamp circuit further comprises a first and a second capacitors coupled in series with the second switch.
12. The method of claim 11, wherein the snubber network of the active clamp circuit further comprises a first diode coupled in series with the second switch, whereby the first diode is configured to retain the absorbed leakage energy in the first and second capacitors by disconnecting the first and second capacitors from the primary coil.
13. The method of claim 12, wherein the snubber network of the active clamp circuit further comprises a second diode coupled in parallel with the first capacitor and the first diode, whereby the second diode is configured to conduct a discharging current of the second capacitor.
14. The method of claim 12, wherein the snubber network of the active clamp circuit further comprises a third diode coupled in parallel with the second capacitor and the first diode, whereby the third diode is configured to conduct a discharging current of the first capacitor.
15. The method of claim 10, wherein the reverse circulating network of the active clamp circuit further comprises a fourth diode coupled in series with the third switch.
16. The method of claim 10, wherein the first control signal is generated to achieve zero voltage switching of the first switch.
17. The method of claim 10, wherein the second control signal is generated to achieve zero voltage switching of the second switch.
18. The method of claim 10, wherein the power conversion apparatus further comprises a diode configured to achieve zero voltage switching of the third switch, the diode coupled between the snubber network and the reverse circulating network
19. The method of actively clamping a power conversion circuit, the power conversion circuit comprising a primary and a secondary coils, the primary coil configured to receive an input voltage from an power source, the secondary coil electromagnetically coupled with the primary coil and configured to provide an output voltage, the method comprising:

turning on a first switch so as to store energy in a primary coil;

turning off the first switch and turning on a second and a third switches so as to transfer a leakage energy associated with the primary and secondary coils to a first and a second capacitors by charging the first and second capacitors in series;

retaining the leakage energy in the first and second capacitors by disconnecting the first and second capacitors from the primary coil by using a first diode;

transferring the leakage energy from the first and second capacitors to the primary coil by discharging the first and second capacitors in parallel through a second and a third diodes;

turning off the second switch so as to clamp a flow of current through the primary coil in a reverse direction by using the third switch and a fourth diode; and

turning off the third switch so as to transfer the leakage energy from the primary coil to the power source.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein the second switch is turned on with a first delay after the turning-off of the first switch, so as to achieve zero voltage switching of the first switch.
21. The method of claim 19, wherein the third switch is switched off with a second delay before the next turning-on of the first switch, so as to achieve zero voltage switching of the first switch.
22. The method of claim 19, wherein being charged, the first and second capacitors are configured to operate in a series resonant manner with the primary coil and a leakage inductance.