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Jin, Yu; Xiao, Qian; Jia, Hongjie; Ji, Yanchao; Dragicevic, Tomislav; Teodorescu, Remus; Blaabjerg, Frede

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A Novel Detection and Localization Approach of Open-Circuit Switch Fault for the Grid-Connected Modular Multilevel Converter

Yu Jin, Qian Xiao, Hongjie Jia, Senior Member, IEEE, Yanchao Ji, Tomislav Dragićević, Senior Member, IEEE, Remus Teodorescu, Fellow, IEEE, Frede Blaabjerg, Fellow, IEEE

Abstract—The open-circuit fault detection and localization (FDL) technique can improve the reliability of the modular multilevel converter (MMC). However, the conventional software-based FDL methods usually have a heavy computation burden or a limited localization speed. This paper proposes a simplified and fast software-based FDL approach for the grid-connected MMC. Firstly, the errors between the measured state variables (the output current and the circulating current) and their estimated values are calculated. By comparing these errors with their threshold values, the switch fault can not only be detected, but also be localized to the specific arm. Then, the capacitor voltages in this faulty arm are collected, and the submodule (SM) with the highest capacitor voltage is selected. To confirm the switch fault in this SM, a modified Pauta criterion is presented to check the abnormal voltage data. As a result, the computation burden of the proposed software-based FDL approach is significantly reduced, and the faulty SM can be localized in a short period. Simulation and experimental results verify that the proposed approach can effectively detect and localize different open-circuit faults, and it is immune to the step of power references.

Index Terms—modular multilevel converter, fault detection, fault localization, open-circuit fault, switch fault.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, the modular multilevel converter (MMC) has emerged as one of the most promising topologies in the medium and high voltage applications [1], such as high-voltage dc (HVdc) systems, battery energy storage systems (BESSs), power electronic transformers (PET), motor drives, synchronous static compensators (STATCOMs), and so on [2]-[5]. The MMC has the advantages of modularity, scalability, low switching frequency, and good harmonic performance due to a large number of submodules (SMs) [6]. However, the existence of these SMs also increases the possibility of switch fault. It is estimated that over 38% of the faults in power conversion are attributed to semiconductor faults [7], [8]. Therefore, the fault detection and localization (FDL) technique has developed as an effective way to improve the reliability of power converters, especially for the MMC with a large number of power switches.

In general, there are two kinds of switch faults, the open-circuit fault and the short-circuit fault. The short-circuit fault is usually destructive and causes a high overcurrent within a short period. In practical engineering, the gate driver is usually integrated with short-circuit fault detection and protection circuits. Once detected with short-circuit fault, it will shut down the switching signals and bypass this SM immediately. On the contrary, the open-circuit fault is not very destructive and may even maintain undetected for some periods. The open-circuit fault is usually caused by unavailable drive signals, internal rupture of the wire connections, bond wire lift-off, and so on [9]. The SM with an open-circuit fault shows abnormal behavior only under certain switching statuses. If not detected in time, the open-circuit fault might cause secondary damage to the device and even lead to system failure. Therefore, it is necessary to detect and localize the open-circuit fault. The FDL methods can be categorized into hardware-based methods and software-based methods.

For the hardware-based method, a voltage and time criterion is used in [10] to process the error voltage signals from the fast A/D converter and FPGA. This method can diagnose the faulty arm, but it cannot localize the faulty SM. An improved FDL method is presented with additional SM output voltage measurement circuits and FPGA [11]. However, the extra cost and the design difficulty of the hardware circuits in each SM increase by a large extent. To simplify the hardware circuit, an FDL method based on arm inductor voltage is proposed in [12], where an additional rectifier bridge and FPGA are required. An FDL method by arm output voltage is proposed in [13], where the high-voltage hall-effect voltage sensors are necessary. Similarly, a fault localization method based on the arm output voltages is presented in [14], which can be applied to localize multiple SM faults in the same arm. However, in practical industrial applications, the arm voltage rating of the MMC can be very high, and the high-voltage hall-effect voltage sensor is quite expensive. Some other hardware-based methods are realized by changing the position of SM voltage sensors from the capacitor terminals to the SM output terminals [15], [16]. In [15], the measured SM output voltage and the arm currents are used to localize the faulty SM. In [16], the SM output voltage sensors and the capacitor voltage observer are combined to...
realize the fast localization of the faulty SM. Overall, the hardware-based methods can provide faster detection of SM faults. However, they require a higher cost for additional power components or a repositioning of the voltage sensor in each SM.

For the software-based method, a sliding-mode-observer-based FDL method is analyzed in [17]. Based on the observed and the measured values of the circulating current, the faulty phase can be detected if the error exceeds a certain threshold. In [18], an observer-based injection item is introduced to estimate the system uncertainty and disturbance, which can improve the robustness and the accuracy of the sliding mode observer. A state observer is applied in [19], and a Kalman filter is applied in [20] to observe the circulating current. Similarly, the observed circulating current is compared with the measured value, and the error is used to identify the occurrence of SM fault. Then, the faulty SM can be localized by comparing the measured SM capacitor voltages with their reference values. In [21], a virtual capacitance estimation-based method is presented to detect and localize the faulty SM. In [22], the MMC predictive model is applied to detect the fault signal by predicting the circulating current. In [23], a capacitor voltage similarity-based method is proposed to localize the faulty SM. It calculates the correlation coefficients for every two SMs within the faulty arm and brings a heavy computation burden. In [24], a fault localization method is proposed, especially for the lower switch open-circuit fault. By analyzing the capacitor voltage increment in each switching period, the faulty SM can be localized. However, there is no fault detection operation, and more SMs need to be checked for fault localization.

In this paper, a simplified and fast software-based FDL approach of open-circuit switch fault is proposed for the grid-connected MMC. Compared with the conventional software-based FDL methods, the main contributions are as follows.

1) Two state variables (the output current and circulating current) are used to detect the open-circuit fault, so that reliable fault detection and faulty arm localization can be achieved simultaneously in the grid-connected MMC.

2) The measured state variables are compared with their estimated values instead of their references. Therefore, the fault detection is immune to the step of power references.

3) By faulty arm localization and modified Pauita criterion, the computation burden can be greatly reduced, and the faulty SM can be localized within a short period.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. Section II introduces the operation principle and control model of the MMC. Section III analyzes the MMC behaviors under open-circuit fault. The proposed FDL approach is presented in Section IV. The parameter selection principle of the proposed FDL approach is analyzed in Section V. Simulation and experimental results are given in Section VI and Section VII, respectively, which verify the effectiveness of the proposed approach. The main conclusion is summarized in Section VIII.

II. OPERATION PRINCIPLE AND CONTROL MODEL OF THE MMC

The basic operation principle and control model of the MMC are introduced in this section.

A. Operation Principle of the MMC

The circuit configuration of a three-phase MMC is shown in Fig. 1. The ac terminals of the MMC are connected to the ac grid through filter inductors (inductance $L$ and equivalent resistance $R$), and the dc terminals of the MMC are connected to the dc source. In each phase, there are an upper arm and a lower arm. Each arm includes $N$ half-bridge (HB) SMs. The HB SM contains a dc capacitor $(C)$, two complementary switches, and two diodes (i.e., $S_1$, $S_2$, $D_1$, and $D_2$). The upper arm and the lower arm are connected through arm inductors (inductance $L_{arm}$ and equivalent resistance $R_{arm}$), and the middle point is connected to the ac output terminal.

Normally, the output signal of each SM is controlled by its switching function $S_{j,n}$, which is defined as

$$S_{j,n} = \begin{cases} 1, & S_1 = 1 \text{ and } S_2 = 0 \\ 0, & S_1 = 0 \text{ and } S_2 = 1 \end{cases}$$

where $x$ indicates the arm position ($x = u, l$); $j$ indicates the phase order ($j = a, b, c$); $m$ indicates the SM number in each arm ($m = 1, 2, \ldots, N$).

Supposing the SM capacitor voltage is $v_{SM}$, the SM output voltage can be expressed as

$$u_{SM} = S_{j,n} \cdot v_{SM}$$

During normal operation, there are four operation modes in each SM. The current paths of the four operation modes are shown in Fig. 2, and the detailed operation statuses are listed in Table I. For mode I, the arm current is positive ($i_{q,n} > 0$), the switching function is 1 ($S_{j,n}=1$), and this SM is inserted. In this mode, the capacitor is charged, and the output voltage is $v_{SM}$. For mode II, the arm current is positive ($i_{q,n} > 0$), the switching function is 0 ($S_{j,n}=0$), and this SM is bypassed. In this mode, the capacitor is bypassed, and the output voltage is 0. For mode III, the arm current is negative ($i_{q,n} < 0$), the switching function is 1 ($S_{j,n}=1$), and the SM is inserted. In this mode, the capacitor is discharged, and the output voltage is $v_{SM}$. For mode IV, the arm current is negative ($i_{q,n} < 0$), the switching function is 0 ($S_{j,n}=0$), and the SM is bypassed. In this mode, the capacitor is bypassed, and the output voltage is 0.
The MMC single-phase equivalent circuit is shown in Fig. 1 (b), which can be further divided into two control paths, the ac control path in Fig. 1 (c) and the dc control path in Fig. 1 (d). Applying KVL to the equivalent control paths individually, the following equations can be derived
\[
\begin{cases}
R_{eq}i_j + L_{eq}(di_j/dt) = u_j - u_{eq} \\
2R_{arm}i_{cirj} + 2L_{arm}(di_{cirj}/dt) = v_{dc} - 2u_{comj}
\end{cases}
\]  
(3)

where \(i_j\) is the output current; \(u_j\) is the equivalent output voltage; \(u_{eq}\) is the grid voltage; \(v_{dc}\) is the dc-link voltage; \(i_{cirj}\) is the circulating current; \(L_{eq}\) and \(R_{eq}\) are the equivalent inductance and resistance in the ac path; \(i_j, u_j, i_{cirj}, \) and \(u_{comj}\) are defined as
\[
i_j = i_{j1} - i_{j2}, \quad u_j = u_{j1} - u_{j2}, \quad i_{cirj} = \frac{i_{j1} + i_{j2}}{2}, \quad u_{comj} = \frac{u_{j1} + u_{j2}}{2}
\]  
(4)

where \(i_{j1}\) and \(i_{j2}\) are the arm currents in the upper and lower arms, respectively; \(u_{j1}\) and \(u_{j2}\) are the arm output voltages in the upper and lower arms, respectively. \(L_{eq}\) and \(R_{eq}\) can be defined as
\[
L_{eq} = L + (L_{arm}/2), \quad R_{eq} = R + (R_{arm}/2)
\]  
(5)

The arm output voltage references can be expressed as
\[
\begin{cases}
u_{u1} = (v_{dc}/2) - u_j + u_{cirj} \\
v_{u2} = (v_{dc}/2) + u_j + u_{cirj}
\end{cases}
\]  
(6)

where \(u_j\) and \(u_{cirj}\) are arm output voltage references; \(u_j^*\) is the ac output voltage references of the MMC; \(u_{cirj}^*\) is the voltage references for the circulating current control.

The conventional MMC linear control method in [25] is adopted to calculate the references \(u_j^*\) and \(u_{cirj}^*\), which will not be further discussed in this paper.

### III. MMC Behaviors under Open-Circuit Fault

In this section, the MMC output behaviors under different open-circuit faults are analyzed.

**A. Behaviors of the Faulty SM**

When an open-circuit fault occurs, the output voltage and current path of the faulty SM will be influenced under specific switching status. As shown in Fig. 3, there are two types of open-circuit faults, \(S_1\) fault and \(S_2\) fault. The abnormal SM behaviors under two types of faults are listed in Table II. For \(S_1\) fault, the current path is blocked under operation mode III \((i_j<0, S_{com}=1)\), and the current will go through the lower diode \(D_2\). Consequently, the capacitor in this SM will be bypassed, and the output voltage will be 0 instead of \(v_{SM}\). Under this condition, the capacitor is bypassed instead of being discharged. As a result, the capacitor voltage of the faulty SM tends to increase. For \(S_2\) fault, the current path is blocked under operation mode II \((i_j>0, S_{com}=0)\), and the current will go through the upper diode \(D_1\). Consequently, the capacitor in this SM will be charged, and the output voltage will be \(v_{SM}\) instead of 0. Under this condition, the capacitor is charged instead of being bypassed. As a result, the capacitor voltage of the faulty SM also tends to increase.

In conclusion, under both types of open-circuit faults, the capacitor voltage of the faulty SM tends to increase, which might lead to output distortions and malfunction of the MMC. However, the abnormal SM behaviors under different types of faults appear in different switching statuses. In addition, the SM output voltage under \(S_1\) fault tends to decrease while the SM output voltage under \(S_2\) fault tends to increase. The above differences can be used as the criterion to distinguish different open-circuit faults.

**B. Output Characteristics of the Faulty Phase**

According to the above discussion, when the open-circuit fault occurs, the output voltage of the faulty SM is different from the normal operation condition. Therefore, the measured values of output current and circulating current differ from their estimated values. This phenomenon can be used to detect the open-circuit fault and localize the faulty arm.

Based on the fault types in Table II and the positions of the faulty SM (fault in the upper or the lower arm), the fault conditions can be classified into four categories, the fault code of which is defined as 1 to 4. By substituting (4) into (3), the MMC control model can be derived, and the characteristics of the four fault codes can be analyzed.

\[
\begin{cases}
R_{eq}i_j + L_{eq}(di_j/dt) = (u_{j1} - u_{j2})/2 - u_{cirj} \\
2R_{arm}i_{cirj} + 2L_{arm}(di_{cirj}/dt) = v_{dc} - (u_{j1} + u_{j2})
\end{cases}
\]  
(7)

The output characteristics of the faulty phase are listed in Table III, and they are further explained as follows.

**Fault code 1:** For the first fault condition, \(S_1\) fault occurs in the upper arm. According to the behavior descriptions in Table II, the faulty SM generates a lower output voltage under certain switching status. Hence, the output voltage of the upper arm \(u_{j1}\) will be lower than the reference value. Based on the control equation in (7), when \(u_{j1}\) decreases, the output current \(i_j\) and the circulating current \(i_{cirj}\) increase at the same time. Therefore, the measured output current and circulating current will be higher than their estimated values.

**Fault code 2:** For the second fault condition, \(S_2\) fault occurs in the upper arm. According to the behavior descriptions in Table II, the faulty SM generates a higher output voltage under certain switching status. Hence, the output voltage of the upper arm will be higher than the expected value.
TABLE III FAULT CODE DEFINITION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fault code</th>
<th>Faulty arm</th>
<th>Faulty arm switch</th>
<th>Arm voltage</th>
<th>Output current</th>
<th>Circulating current</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Upper arm</td>
<td>$S_1$ fault</td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>Higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Upper arm</td>
<td>$S_1$ fault</td>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>Lower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lower arm</td>
<td>$S_1$ fault</td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>Higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lower arm</td>
<td>$S_1$ fault</td>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>Lower</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 4. Basic principle of the fault detection algorithm.

The measured output current and circulating current will be lower than the estimated value.

Fault code 3: For the third fault condition, $S_1$ fault occurs in the lower arm. According to the behavior descriptions in Table II, the faulty SM generates a lower output voltage under certain switching status. Hence, the output voltage of the lower arm $u_{ij}$ will be lower than the reference value. Based on the control equation in (7), if $u_{ij}$ increases, the output current $i_j$ decreases, and the circulating current $i_{circ}$ increases. Therefore, the measured output current will be lower than the estimated value, while the measured circulating current will be higher than the estimated value.

Fault code 4: For the fourth fault condition, $S_2$ fault occurs in the lower arm. According to the behavior descriptions in Table II, the faulty SM generates a higher output voltage under certain switching status. Hence, the output voltage of the lower arm $u_{ij}$ will be higher than the reference value. Based on the control equation in (7), if $u_{ij}$ decreases, the output current $i_j$ increases, and the circulating current $i_{circ}$ decreases. Therefore, the measured output current will be higher than the estimated value, while the measured circulating current will be lower than the estimated value.

IV. PROPOSED FDL APPROACH

The proposed FDL approach includes two steps. The first step realizes the fault detection and faulty arm localization, and the second step realizes the faulty SM localization.

A. Fault Detection Approach

According to the analysis in Section III, the fault detection method can be designed accordingly, as shown in Fig. 4. It is noted that the MMC controller includes two parts, the output current control and the arm energy and circulating current control. Namely, the output current control is used to control the active and reactive current of the converter. The arm energy and circulating current control is used to balance the internal capacitor voltages and suppress the harmonics of the circulating currents. More details can be found in [25].

For the proposed fault detection approach, firstly, the output current and circulating current are estimated based on the MMC control model.

Supposing the arm output voltage references calculated by the MMC controller are $u_{ij}$ and $u_{ij}^*$, the estimated output current at the current time instant $i_{j,es}(k)$ can be calculated based on the discrete model in (8).

\[
\begin{align*}
\dot{i}_{j,es}(k) &= A_i^e(u_{ij}^*(k-1) - u_{ij}(k-1) - 2u_{ij}(k-1)) + B_i^e(k-1) \\
A_i &= T_i/(2L + L_{arm}), \quad B_i = 1 - [(R_{arm}^2 + 2R_{arm}^2T_i^2)/(2L + L_{arm})]
\end{align*}
\]

where $T_i$ is the sampling period; $k$ indicates the current time instant; $k-1$ indicates the last time instant; $i_{j,es}(k)$ and $u_{ij}(k-1)$ are the measured output current and the measured ac grid voltage at $k-1$ time instant, respectively.

The estimated circulating current at $k$ time instant $i_{circ,es}(k)$ can be expressed as

\[
\begin{align*}
i_{circ,es}(k) &= \text{C}[v_{dc} - (u_{ij}^*(k-1) + u_{ij}(k-1))] + Di_{circ,es}(k-1) \\
C &= T_i/(2L_{arm}), \quad D = 1 - (R_{arm}T_i^2/L_{arm})
\end{align*}
\]

where $i_{circ}(k)$ is the measured circulating current.

The measured output current and the measured circulating current at the current time instant are $i_j(k)$ and $i_{circ}(k)$. The errors between the measured values and the estimated values can be defined as

\[
\begin{align*}
i_{j, error}(k) &= i_j(k) - i_{j,es}(k) \\
i_{circ, error}(k) &= i_{circ}(k) - i_{circ,es}(k)
\end{align*}
\]

where $i_{j, error}(k)$ and $i_{circ, error}(k)$ are the output current error and the circulating current error at $k$ time instant.

To detect the open-circuit fault, these errors are compared to their threshold values. If both errors and their threshold values meet the constraint in (11), the fault signal is triggered. If the fault signal lasts longer than the predefined time threshold $\Delta T_{f,th}$, the open-circuit fault is confirmed in this phase.

\[
\text{fault signal} = \begin{cases} 
1 & \text{if } |i_{j, error}(k)| > \Delta I_{j,th} \quad \text{or} \quad |i_{circ, error}(k)| > \Delta I_{circ,th} 
0 & \text{otherwise}
\end{cases}
\]

where $\Delta I_{j,th}$ is the threshold value of the output current error; $\Delta I_{circ,th}$ is the threshold value of the circulating current error.

After detection of the open-circuit fault, the faulty arm can be localized, and the fault code can be identified

\[
\text{fault code} = \begin{cases} 
1 & i_{j, error}(k) > 0, i_{circ, error}(k) > 0 \\
2 & i_{j, error}(k) < 0, i_{circ, error}(k) < 0 \\
3 & i_{j, error}(k) < 0, i_{circ, error}(k) > 0 \\
4 & i_{j, error}(k) > 0, i_{circ, error}(k) < 0
\end{cases}
\]

As shown in (12), the fault code can be decided based on the fault criterion in Table III. If both errors are positive, the measured output current and circulating current are higher than their estimated values. Therefore, $S_1$ fault occurs in the upper arm, and the fault code is 1. If both errors are negative, the measured output current and circulating current are lower than their estimated values. Therefore, $S_2$ fault occurs in the upper arm, and the fault code is 2. If the output current error is negative and the circulating current error is positive, the measured output current is lower than the estimated value, and the measured circulating current is higher than the estimated value. Therefore, $S_1$ fault occurs in the lower arm, and the fault code is 3. If the output current error is positive and the circulating error
Fault detection criterion in (11) is applied to detect the abnormal capacitor voltage data. The principle of the *Pauta* criterion is as follows:

Suppose $Y$ is the set of all collected values

$$Y = \{y_1, y_2, ... , y_m\}$$

(13)

$\mu$ and $\sigma$ represent the mean value and standard deviation of $Y$, respectively, which can be expressed as

$$\mu = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{m} y_i}{m}$$

(14)

$$\sigma = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{m} (y_i - \mu)^2}{(m-1)}}$$

(15)

The *Pauta* criterion is used in the statistics field to select abnormal data in Gaussian distribution. It indicates that if the error between a specific data and the average value is higher than $3\sigma$ ($\sigma$ is the standard deviation), this data is supposed to be the abnormal data. However, considering the amount of capacitor voltage data is not always large in the MMC, this criterion is modified to reduce the influence of the abnormal value on the standard deviation.

As described above in Section III, if the open-circuit fault occurs, the capacitor voltage of the faulty SM always tends to increase. With this conclusion, if the closed-loop controller in MMC is working normally, the capacitor voltage of the faulty SM should be the highest within several operation periods. However, the SM with the highest capacitor voltages has to be checked if it is the faulty SM. This is because the highest capacitor voltage can also be created by the low speed and wide tolerance band of the individual capacitor voltage balancing controller. Based on this, the principle of the faulty SM localization process is shown in Fig. 5. Firstly, the SM with the highest capacitor voltage is selected as

$$v_{SM p} = \max\{v_{SM1}, v_{SM2}, ..., v_{SMN}\}$$

(16)

Then, the average capacitor voltage of the remaining SMs can be calculated as

$$\overline{v_{SM}}(p) = \frac{\sum_{i=1, i \neq p}^{N} v_{SMi}}{N-1}$$

(17)

Next, the standard deviation of the capacitor voltages in the remaining SMs can be expressed as

$$\sigma(p) = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1, i \neq p}^{N} (v_{SMi} - \overline{v_{SM}}(p))^2}{(N-2)}}$$

(18)

Finally, the capacitor voltage divergence of the selected SM is confirmed. If the capacitor voltage meets the following constraint, this SM is confirmed as the faulty SM.

$$|v_{SM p} - \overline{v_{SM}}(p)| > 3\sigma(p)$$

(19)

The faulty SM can thus be localized.

### C. Flowchart of the Proposed FDL Approach

The flow chart of the proposed approach is shown in Fig. 6. First, the state variables are estimated based on the MMC model and control references from the MMC controller. Based on the errors between the measured and estimated values of the state variables, the faulty arm can be localized in (11). Then, the SM with the highest capacitor voltage is selected in this faulty arm.
The runtime cycles can be calculated in (18). Finally, the criterion. Most of the FDL methods are verified in MMC modified.

The proposed approach has a relatively low computation burden compared with other FDL approaches. It can also be seen that the method in [19] has the least computation burden. However, it requires a higher time for faulty SM localization, as shown in Table IV.

V. DISCUSSION

In this section, the design principles of the threshold values are discussed for the proposed FDL approach. For the proposed FDL approach, the fault detection is realized by judging the errors between the estimated and measured values of the circulating current and output current. When the errors exceed the threshold values for a certain time period, the SM fault is ascertained. Therefore, it is necessary to carefully select and design the error and time threshold values.

A. Selection of the Threshold Values for ∆I_f,th

As described in the above section, the fault detection algorithm is established based on the measured and estimated values. Hence, the detection results are influenced by the sensor errors and the parameter accuracy of the predictive model. However, the sensor errors have a great influence on the control voltage source applications. The FDL method in [21] discusses its application for closed-loop control in the grid-connected MMC. However, the virtual SM capacitance estimation method is more complicated. In comparison, the proposed approach is designed especially for the grid-connected MMC application. It is noted that the main differences between the voltage source application and the grid-connected application are as follows:

1) The control targets and equations are different. For the voltage source application, the MMC is usually connected to the ac loads, and the control target is the output current and the circulating current. For the grid-connected application, the MMC is usually connected to the ac grid, and the control target is the output current and the circulating current.

2) The output current can be predicted in the grid-connected application. However, it cannot be predicted in the voltage source application due to the unpredicted ac loads.

The runtime cycles of the basic operations are listed in Table V [28], and the computation burden comparison of the software-based approaches is shown in Table VI. It is noted F_0 is defined as the sampling cycles in each fundamental period.

\[
F_0 = f_s / f_g \quad (20)
\]

where \(f_s\) is the grid frequency, \(f_s\) is the sampling frequency.

Supposing the sampling frequency is \(f_s=1 \text{ kHz}\), then \(F_0\) is equal to 20, and the computation burden of the software-based approaches can be shown in Fig. 7. It is clear that the proposed approach has a relatively low computation burden compared with other FDL approaches. It can also be seen that the method in [19] has the least computation burden. However, it requires a higher time for faulty SM localization, as shown in Table IV.

![Fig. 7. Computation burden of different FDL approaches.](image-url)
accuracy but a very limited influence on the detection algorithm. Therefore, firstly, the threshold values are discussed based on the errors of the predictive model parameters.

As discussed in equation (8), the estimated value of the output current is mainly influenced by the parameter errors of the filter inductor and the arm inductor. Based on the simulation and experimental parameters, \( (R_{arm}+2R)T/2L+I_{arm} \) is much smaller than 1, and the coefficient \( B=1 \). As a result, the estimated value of the output current can be simplified as

\[
i_{j,cs}(k) = \frac{T_s[u_{j}(k-1)-u_{j}(k-1)-2u_{j}(k-1)]}{2L+I_{arm}} + i_{j}(k-1) \quad (21)
\]

It can be seen that the error of the estimated output current is mainly influenced by the filter and arm inductors. Usually, the uncertainties of the circuit parameters (especially the inductors) are within about 5% [29]. Define the estimated output current increment as

\[
i_{j,inc,cs}(k) = i_{j,cs}(k) - i_{j}(k-1) \quad (22)
\]

Supposing the maximum parameter uncertainties are 5% or –5%, the estimated output current increment error will be about \( 1/0.95=1.0526 \) or \( 1/1.05=0.9524 \) times the actual value, and the percentages of the increment error are about 5.26% and 4.76%, respectively. The estimated output current can be expressed as

\[
i_{j,cs}(k) = i_{j,inc,cs}(k) + i_{j}(k-1) \quad (23)
\]

During the steady-state operation condition, the error of the estimated output current will be lower than 5.26% and 4.76%. To avoid the disturbance of the parameter uncertainties, the threshold value should be selected to be higher than the error. Therefore, the first limitation should be that

\[
\Delta I_{j,th} > 5.26\% I_{rated} \quad (24)
\]

where \( I_{rated} \) is the rated amplitude of the output current.

In addition, the output current error is severely influenced by the abnormal output arm voltages, which is caused by the unexpected behavior of the faulty SM. The detailed analysis is as follows:

When the faulty SM appears, the influence of the abnormal SM output voltage on the circulating current can be derived based on (21)

\[
\Delta I_{j,th} = \frac{\Delta T_s V_{SM}}{2L+I_{arm}} \quad (25)
\]

where \( \Delta \) is the duty cycle of the faulty SM. The second limitation of the threshold value can thus be expressed as

\[
\Delta I_{j,th} > \Delta I_{j,th,0} = \frac{\Delta T_s V_{SM}}{2L+I_{arm}} \quad (26)
\]

The threshold value of the output current error can thus be ascertained.

B. Selection of the Threshold Values for \( \Delta I_{ojj,th} \)

As discussed in subsection A, the estimated value of the circulating current is mainly influenced by the parameter error of the arm inductor. Based on the simulation and experimental parameters, \( R_{arm}T/2L+I_{arm} \) is much smaller than 1, and the coefficient \( D=1 \). Therefore, the estimated value of the circulating current can be simplified as

\[
i_{ojj,cs}(k) = \frac{T_v[u_{ojj}(k-1)-u_{ojj}(k-1)+u_{ojj}(k-1)]}{2I_{arm}} + i_{ojj}(k-1) \quad (27)
\]

Similarly, the error of estimated circulating current is influenced by the arm inductors, and the uncertainties of the circuit parameters are supposed to be within about 5% [29]. During the steady-state operation condition, the error of the estimated circulating current will be lower than 5.26% and 4.76%. To avoid the disturbance of the parameter uncertainties, the threshold value should be selected to be higher than the error. Therefore, the first limitation should be that

\[
\Delta I_{ojj,th} > 5.26\% I_{circ\_rated} \quad (28)
\]

where \( I_{circ\_rated} \) is the rated amplitude of the circulating current.

In addition, the circulating current error is severely influenced by the abnormal arm output voltages, which is caused by the unexpected behavior of the faulty SM. The detailed analysis is as follows:

When the faulty SM appears, the influence of the abnormal SM output voltage on the circulating current is derived according to (27)

\[
\Delta I_{ojj, error} = \frac{\Delta T_s V_{SM}}{2L+I_{arm}} \quad (29)
\]

The second limitation of the threshold value can be expressed as

\[
\Delta I_{ojj,th} > \Delta I_{ojj, error} = \frac{\Delta T_s V_{SM}}{2L+I_{arm}} \quad (30)
\]

The threshold value of the circulating current error can thus be ascertained.

C. Selection of the Threshold Values for \( \Delta T_{f,th} \)

The threshold value for \( \Delta T_{f,th} \) is also important for the proposed fault detection algorithm, which will help to eliminate the influence of system disturbance and increase the reliability of the fault detection results.

Firstly, as analyzed above, the abnormal output voltage of the faulty SM only appear in one certain switching status (switching status III under \( S_1 \) fault and switching status II under \( S_2 \) fault), which means the abnormal output voltage only appears in the following conditions: \( i_{j}<0 \) under \( S_1 \) fault, and \( i_{j}>0 \) under \( S_2 \) fault. If the output current of the MMC is sinusoidal, the time ratios under \( i_{j}<0 \) and \( i_{j}>0 \) will account for 50%. It further indicates that the fault code criterion in (12) is active only in half of the fundamental period. Therefore, the first limitation for the threshold value \( \Delta T_{f,th} \) will be

\[
\Delta T_{f,th} < 0.5T_g \quad (31)
\]

where \( T_g \) is the fundamental period.

In addition, the system disturbance (sensor disturbance, etc.) usually appears in each sampling period. To avoid the influence

<table>
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<td><strong>Items</strong></td>
<td><strong>Symbols</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rated dc voltage</td>
<td>( V_{dc} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grid line-to-line voltage</td>
<td>( V_{gl} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arm inductor Inductance</td>
<td>( L_{arm} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>( R_{arm} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ac inductor Inductance</td>
<td>( L )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>( R )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrier frequency</td>
<td>( f_{carrier} )</td>
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<tr>
<td>SM number per arm</td>
<td>( N )</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \Delta I_{ojj,th} )</td>
<td>( \Delta I_{ojj,0} )</td>
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</table>
of the system disturbance, the threshold value $\Delta T_{j,th}$ should be higher than the sampling period, which gives the second limitation

$$\Delta T_{j,th} > T_s$$

(32)

Based on these two limitations, the time threshold of the fault signal can thus be selected.

VI. SIMULATION RESULTS

To validate the performance of the proposed FDL approach, a simulation study is conducted in a three-phase grid-connected MMC. The simulation parameters are listed in Table VII, which are selected based on [25]. Due to the page limit, this section only provides the results under fault code 1, fault code 4, and the step of power references.

A. $S_1$ fault in the upper arm

The simulation results under $S_1$ fault in SM$_1$ in the upper arm in phase $a$ are shown in Fig. 8. When the open-circuit fault occurs, the measured output current and circulating current are both higher than the estimated value for the first several periods. As a result, the fault code is identified as 1 after about 10 ms. In addition, the capacitor voltage of the faulty SM increases, and the faulty SM is localized as SM$_1$ in the upper arm. The results verify the effectiveness of the proposed FDL approach.

B. $S_2$ fault in the lower arm

Fig. 9 shows the simulation results under $S_2$ fault in SM$_1$ in the lower arm in phase $a$. When the open-circuit fault occurs, the measured output current is higher than the estimated value, and the measured circulating current is lower than the estimated value for the first several periods. Therefore, the fault code is identified as 4 after about 10 ms. Meanwhile, the capacitor voltage of the faulty SM increases, and the faulty SM is localized as SM$_1$ in the lower arm. The results verify the effectiveness of the proposed FDL approach.

C. Immunity against the step of power references

To verify the immunity of the proposed approach against the step of power references, the simulation results are given in Fig. 10. As shown in Fig. 10, when the power step occurs, the estimated output current experiences some disturbance for the first few sampling periods, and the estimated circulating current almost remain normal. Therefore, there is no detected fault signal under this condition. The robustness of the proposed FDL approach can thus be validated.

VII. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

A three-phase downscaled MMC prototype in Fig. 11 to verify the effectiveness of the proposed FDL approach. The circuit parameters are also listed in Table VII. The MMC prototype works in the inverter mode, where the dc terminals are connected to a dc voltage source. The ac output terminals are connected to the grid emulated by an isolated transformer. The proposed algorithm is implemented on the digital signal processing controller, and the control signals from the controller are sent to each SM by optical fibers.

A. $S_1$ fault in the upper arm

The experimental results under $S_1$ fault in SM$_1$ in the upper arm in phase $a$ are shown in Fig. 12. The output current, circulating current, and their estimated values are shown in Fig. 12 (a). At the first several periods after the open-circuit fault, both the output current and the circulating current are higher than...
Fig. 12. Experimental results of the faulty phase under $S_3$ fault in $SM_{la}$. (a) Output current, circulating current, and their references, (b) output current error, circulating current error, fault signal, and fault code, and (c) capacitor voltages.

Fig. 13. Experimental results of the faulty phase under $S_3$ fault in $SM_{la}$. (a) Output current, circulating current, and their references, (b) output current error, circulating current error, fault signal, and fault code, and (c) capacitor voltages.

Fig. 14. Experimental results of the faulty phase under $S_3$ fault in $SM_{la}$. (a) Output current, circulating current, and their references, (b) output current error, circulating current error, fault signal, and fault code, and (c) capacitor voltages.

Fig. 15. Experimental results of the faulty phase under $S_3$ fault in $SM_{la}$. (a) Output current, circulating current, and their references, (b) output current error, circulating current error, fault signal, and fault code, and (c) capacitor voltages.

13 (b). In addition, the capacitor voltages are shown in Fig. 13 (c), where the capacitor of the faulty SM tends to diverge, and the SM fault can be localized, as shown in Fig. 13 (b).

C. $S_1$ fault in the lower arm

The experimental results under $S_1$ fault in $SM_{la}$ are shown in Fig. 14. As shown in Fig. 14 (a), when the open-circuit fault occurs, the output current is lower, and the circulating current is higher than their estimated values. Based on (12), the fault code is identified as 3 after about 4.0 ms, as shown in Fig. 14 (b). At the same time, the capacitor voltages are shown in Fig. 14 (c), where the capacitor voltage of the faulty SM tends to diverge, and the SM fault is localized, as shown in Fig. 14 (b).

D. $S_2$ fault in the lower arm

The experimental results under $S_2$ fault in $SM_{la}$ are shown in Fig. 15. It can be seen in Fig. 15 (a), when the open-circuit fault occurs, the output current is higher, and the circulating current is lower than their estimated values. Based on (12), the fault code is identified as 4 after about 6.1 ms, as shown in Fig. 15 (b). At the same time, the capacitor voltages are shown in Fig. 15 (c), where the capacitor voltage of the faulty SM tends to diverge, and the SM fault is localized, as shown in Fig. 15 (b).

E. Immunity test of the proposed FDL approach

To verify the robustness of the proposed approach, the experimental results under steady-state and the power step operation conditions are shown in Fig. 16 and Fig. 17. As shown in Fig. 16 (a), the model-based estimated output current and circulating current can accurately track the realistic measured values under steady-state operations. As shown in Fig. 16 (b), no fault is detected during normal operations. In addition, the capacitor voltage waveforms are shown in Fig. 16 (c), where the average values stabilize at about 30 V. As shown in Fig. 17 (a), the model-based estimated output current and circulating current can accurately track the measured values during power
step operation. As shown in Fig. 17 (b), no fault is detected during the power step operation. In addition, the capacitor voltages are shown in Fig. 17 (c), where the average values are about 30 V. The above experimental results verify the immunity of the proposed approach under steady-state and power step operation conditions.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This paper has proposed a simplified and fast open-circuit FDL approach for the grid-connected MMC. This approach includes two steps. The first step realizes the fault detection and faulty arm localization, and the second step realizes the faulty SM localization. Based on the theoretical analysis and verification results, the following conclusion can be drawn.

1) By the faulty arm localization and voltage divergence confirmation of the SM with the highest capacitor voltage, the computation burden can be significantly reduced.

2) Under different open-circuit faults, the proposed approach can detect and localize the faulty SM within about 10 ms.

3) The proposed approach operates stably under steady-state operation conditions, and it is immune to disturbance from the step of power references.

Nevertheless, this paper only focuses on the single switch open-circuit fault conditions. The FDL approach for multiple switch faults will be discussed in future research work.

REFERENCES


Yu Jin received the B.S. in electrical engineering from School of Electrical Engineering and Automation, Harbin Institute of Technology, Harbin, China, in 2015. Since 2015, he has been working for the combined M.S. and Ph. D. degree in electrical engineering at the School of Electrical Engineering and Automation in Harbin Institute of Technology. From October 2018 to October 2020, he was a two-year visiting scholar with the Department of Energy Technology, Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark. His current research interests include multilevel converters and their applications.

Qian Xiao (Member, IEEE) received the Ph.D. degree in electrical engineering from Tianjin University, Tianjin, China, in 2020. From 2018 to 2019, he was a Visiting Scholar with the Department of Energy Technology, Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark. He has been awarded under the International Postdoctoral Exchange Fellowship Program 2021 for his postdoctoral research in Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Since January 2020, he has been an Assistant Professor with Tianjin University. His current research interests include microgrids, DC distribution network, multilevel converters and battery energy storage system.

Hongjie Jia (Senior Member, IEEE) received the Ph.D. degree in electrical engineering from Tianjin University, Tianjin, China, in 2001. He became an Associate Professor at Tianjin University in 2002 and was promoted as Professor in 2006. His research interests include power reliability assessment, stability analysis and control, distribution network planning and automation, and smart grids.

Yanchao Ji (Member, IEEE) received the B. Eng. and M. Eng. degrees in electrical engineering from the Northeast Electric Power University, Jilin, China, in 1983 and 1989, respectively, and the Ph.D. degree in electrical engineering from the North China Electric Power University, Beijing, China, in 1993. He joined the Department of Electrical Engineering, Harbin Institute of Technology, Harbin, China, in 1993. From 1995 to 1996, he was an Associate Professor with the Department of Electrical Engineering, Harbin Institute of Technology, where he is currently a Professor. His current research interests include pulswidth modulation technique, power converter, and flexible ac transmission systems devices.

Remus Teodorescu (Fellow, IEEE) received the Dipl. Ing. degree in electrical engineering from the Polytechnical University of Bucharest, Bucharest, Romania, in 1989, Ph.D. degree in power electronics from the University of Galati, Romania, in 1994, and Dr. HC in 2016 from Transylvania University of Brașov. In 1998, he joined the Department of Energy Technology at Aalborg University where he is currently a Full Professor. From 2013 to 2017, he has been a Visiting Professor with Chalmers University. He is IEEE/PELS Fellow since 2012 for contributions to grid converters technology for renewable energy systems. In 2022 he became a Villum Investigator and leader of Center of Research for Smart Battery at Aalborg University.

His main current research areas are: Modular Multilevel Converters (MMC) for HVDC/FACTS, Li-Ion battery SOH Estimation with AI and Smart Batteries.

Tomislav Dragičević (Senior Member, IEEE) received the M.Sc. and industrial Ph.D. degrees in electrical engineering from the Faculty of Electrical Engineering, University of Zagreb, Zagreb, Croatia, in 2009 and 2013, respectively. From 2013 to 2016, he was a Postdoctoral Researcher and from 2016 to 2020, he was an Associate Professor with Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark. Since 2020, he has been a Professor with the Technical University of Denmark, Kongens Lyngby, Denmark. He has authored and coauthored more than 200 technical publications (more than 100 of them are published in international journals, mostly in IEEE), eight book chapters, and a book in the field. His research interests include application of advanced control, optimization and artificial intelligence inspired techniques to provide innovative and effective solutions to emerging challenges in design, control and cyber-security of power electronics intensive electrical distribution systems, and microgrids.

Dr. Dragičević serves as an Associate Editor for the IEEE TRANSACTIONS ON INDUSTRIAL ELECTRONICS, IEEE TRANSACTIONS ON POWER ELECTRONICS, IEEE EMERGING AND SELECTED TOPICS IN POWER ELECTRONICS, and IEEE Industrial Electronics Magazine. He was a recipient of the Koncar Prize for the Best Industrial Ph.D. thesis in Croatia, a Robert Mayer Energy Conservation Award, and a winner of an Alexander von Humboldt Fellowship for experienced researchers.

Frede Blaabjerg (Fellow, IEEE) was with ABB-Scandia, Randers, Denmark, from 1987 to 1988. From 1988 to 1992, he got the PhD degree in Electrical Engineering at Aalborg University in 1995. He became an Assistant Professor in 1992, an Associate Professor in 1996, and a Full Professor of power electronics and drives in 1998. From 2017 he became a Villum Investigator. He is honoris causa at University Politehnica Timisoara (UPT), Romania and Tallinn Technical University (TTU) in Estonia. His current research interests include power electronics and its applications such as in wind turbines, PV systems, reliability, harmonics and adjustable speed drives. He has published more than 600 journal papers in the fields of power electronics and its applications. He is the co-author of four monographs and editor of ten books in power electronics and its applications. He has received 33 IEEE Prize Paper Awards, the IEEE PELS Distinguished Service Award in 2009, the EPE-PEMC Council Award in 2010, the IEEE William E. Newell Power Electronics Award 2014, the Villum Kann Rasmussen Research Award 2014, the Global Energy Prize in 2019 and the 2020 IEEE Edison Medal. He was the Editor-in-Chief of the IEEE TRANSACTIONS ON POWER ELECTRONICS from 2006 to 2012. He has been Distinguished Lecturer for the IEEE Power Electronics Society from 2005 to 2007 and for the IEEE Industry Applications Society from 2010 to 2011 as well as 2017 to 2018. In 2019-2020 he served as a President of IEEE Power Electronics Society. He has been Vice-President of the Danish Academy of Technical Sciences.

He is nominated in 2014-2020 by Thomson Reuters to be between the most 250 cited researchers in Engineering in the world.