Cascaded Multilevel Inverter Based on Quasi-Z-Source Converter: Analysis, Design and Study of Optimal Structures

E. Babaei* (C.A.), M. Shadnam Zarbil* and E. Shokati Asl*

Abstract: In this paper, a new topology for cascaded multilevel inverter based on quasi-Z-source converter is proposed. In the proposed topology the magnitude of output DC voltage is not limited to the sum of magnitude of DC voltage sources. Moreover, the reliability of the circuit due to capability of short circuit by Z-source network is increased. The quasi-Z-source converter in different modes is analyzed and the voltage gain is obtained. Also, the values of quasi-Z-source network components are designed. In the proposed topology, the number of DC voltage sources, the number of switches, installation area and cost in comparison with conventional multilevel inverters are significantly reduced. Three algorithms to determine the magnitude of DC voltage sources are proposed. Then the optimal structures for the minimum number of switches and DC voltage sources to generate the maximum voltage levels are presented. Moreover, the control method for the proposed topology is described. To verify the performance of the proposed topology, simulation and experimental results of proposed topology are presented.

Keywords: Z-Source Converter, Quasi-Z-Source Converter, Multilevel Inverter, Shoot-Through, Optimization.

1 Introduction

In recent years, multilevel inverters and Z-source converters are becoming more and more popular in industrial and residential applications [1-2]. For applications such as FACTS devices, big electrical drives and dynamic voltage restorers, multilevel inverters have been presented as static converters with high power [2-3]. The main advantage of multilevel inverters is using of low voltage power switches that reduces switching losses and voltage stress across power switches. Moreover, voltage steps with small value for output voltage that leads to high power quality, proper electromagnetic adaptability and small harmonic components [4-5]. Nowadays, high attention to multilevel inverters leads to novel structures with a wide diversity of control methods [6-9]. Cascaded H-bridge (CHB), neutral point clamped (NPC) or diode clamped, and flying capacitor (FC) or capacitor clamped are three basic types of multilevel inverters [10-11]. There are three different basic multilevel inverters: neutral point clamped (NPC) or diode clamped, flying capacitor (FC) or capacitor clamped, and cascaded H-bridge (CHB) [10-11]. Among these topologies, the CHB topologies are appropriate approach for applications with high voltage with regards to easiness of control [12] but high number of separated voltage sources in the topologies is needed. In [13-16], novel topologies have been introduced to decrease the number of used dc voltage sources for applications with high voltage.

In the conventional DC/ac systems an extra converter such as DC-DC boost chopper is used to increase the DC input voltage. In the proposed topology instead of using DC-DC boost chopper, quasi-Z-source converter is used that has advantages such as continuous input current, common ground, and low stress voltage [17]. Quasi-Z-source converter uses an impedance network between DC voltage source and inverter [18]. Increasing the voltage provided by shoot-through (ST) state of converter that it is not possible with conventional inverter and conventional multilevel inverter [19].
In comparison with the conventional inverter, quasi-Z-source converter has lower costs, higher reliability, less complexity, and higher efficiency [20-21]. The quasi-Z source inverter (qZSI) based cascaded multilevel inverter (CMI) have been widely studied in PV power systems because of their excellent ability to handle DC source voltage’s wide variations in single-stage power conversion [22]. Quasi-Z source CMI (qZS-CMI) combined advantages of qZSI and CMI in [23] for applications to PV power system.

In this paper, a new simple and modular topology for cascaded multilevel inverter based on quasi-Z-source inverter converter is proposed. Conventional multilevel inverters do not have high voltage gain but the combination of quasi-Z-source network and multilevel inverter has this feature. The proposed topology produces a large number of voltage levels with lower number of components and power switches. Also, the performance of quasi-Z-source converter used in proposed topology in different operating modes is evaluated and the values of Z-source network components are obtained. Three algorithms to calculate the magnitude of DC voltage sources are proposed. Finally, to show correct performance of the proposed topology, simulation and experimental results are provided.

2 Proposed Topology

Although after Z-source network, quasi-Z-source network is the simplest type of impedance networks but despite the simplicity, this network is very appropriate. In the quasi-Z-source network, current input is continuous and the range of changes for shoot-through duty cycle is wide. Other advantages of quasi-Z-source network are available in the literatures. Fig. 1 shows the power circuit of proposed topology for multilevel inverters based on quasi-Z-source converter, which consists of the basic unit and a full-bridge inverter. The basic unit has $n$ DC voltage sources and $n$ quasi-Z-source network. Each quasi-Z-source network by using two switches is connected to the output and can generate a positive or zero voltage level. Each switch which is shown in Fig. 1 consists of an insulated gate bipolar transistor (IGBT) with an antiparallel diode. A staircase waveform with positive voltage level is generated by the basic unit. The basic unit has output voltage which can be equal to each quasi-Z-source network or binary, ternary ..., or $n$-nary combinations of quasi-Z-source network. Hence, the maximum number of steps of output voltage for $v'_o$ is equal to $2^n-1$. There is connection between output side of the basic unit and a full-bridge single-phase converter, which alternates the polarity of input voltage and helps to generate a staircase negative and positive waveform in output. In Table 1, the values of voltages $v'_1$ and $v'_o$ are shown for different conditions of switches $S_1, S_2, ..., S_n, T_1,$ and $T_2$. According to this table, $2^{n+1}-1$ different values is obtained for $v'_o$.

Switch $T_1$ of proposed unit in Fig. 1 should withstand output voltage of unit but this unit is only a segment of proposed multilevel inverters with several units which is shown in Fig. 2. The output voltage of a unit in comparison with output voltage of multilevel inverter is low and due to advances in semiconductor industries, the switch $T_1$ can tolerate easily. The proposed multilevel inverter is constituted by a cascade connection of sub-multilevel inverters as shown in Fig. 2. The structure of the first, second, ... and $k$-th basic units has $2n_1$, $2n_2$, ..., and $2n_k$ switches, respectively. The full-bridge inverters generate both positive and negative voltages with stepped waveforms in the output. In the proposed cascaded multilevel inverter, the total output voltage is obtained from combination of output voltages of the sub-multilevel inverters as follows:

$$v'_o = v'_{o1} + v'_{o2} + \cdots + v'_{ok}$$  \hspace{1cm} (1)

Combinations of switching states for every cell can lead to different levels of output voltage. By choosing
appropriate values for DC voltage sources, the output voltage of inverter is calculated between \((\sum_{i=1}^{n} \sum_{j} V_{i,j}')\) and \((-\sum_{i=1}^{n} \sum_{j} V_{i,j}'\)). By considering the number of DC voltage sources in basic cell equal to one, there is no requirement for transistors in basic cell. In the proposed topology, the generated output voltage by quasi-Z-source network is connected to the full-bridge inverter. In other words, this topology is equivalent to the CHB inverter with quasi-Z-source network. It is noticeable that quasi-Z-source network avoids from short-circuiting DC voltage sources. Due to this fact that there is no any DC voltage source with direct connection to back of un-folded H-bridge; so, short-circuiting a leg does not lead to short-circuit status of DC voltage sources. In fact, the proposed topology has been protected from short-circuiting DC voltage sources. If the designer and engineer do not consider the way to control input current, classic Z-source converter can lead to high inrush current at start-up. This issue is as result of charging the capacitors. The capacitors at start-up have low impedance against current. If the high value of current is not controlled, the value of current can be tens of amperes. There is a traditional method to decrease the value of inrush current and that method is using the combination of resistor and TRIAC or thermistor with negative thermal factor. Of course, there are other methods to control inrush current that can be founded in the papers. In the quasi-Z-source converters, value of inrush current is low in comparison with Z-source converters. The reason of low inrush current in the quasi-Z-source converters, use of inductor in series with input source.

In each basic unit of the proposed topology as shown in Fig. 1, there are \(n\) quasi-Z-source networks. Each quasi-Z-source network is connected to the output by two switches. Fig. 3 shows the structure of quasi-Z-source converter that includes a DC voltage source and a quasi-Z-source network with two switches \((S_1, S_2)\). In Fig. 3(a), the following assumptions are considered [24]:

\[
L = L_1 = L_2
\]

\[
C = C_1 = C_2
\]

The converter shown in Fig. 3(a) has two operating modes in continuous conduction mode (CCM). The first operating mode is ST state with \(T_{ST}\) period and the second operation mode is non-ST state with \(T_{nST}\) period that there is always the following equation [25]:

\[
T_s = T_{ST} + T_{nST}
\]

Duty cycle of ST mode \((D_{ST})\) is calculated as follows:

\[
D_{ST} = \frac{T_{ST}}{T_s}
\]

Duty cycle of non-ST mode is \(D_{nST}\) and is defined as follows:

\[
D_{nST} = 1 - D_{ST}
\]

Table 1 Values of \(v_{s,i}'\) and \(v_s\) for different conditions of switches.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>(S_1)</th>
<th>(S_2)</th>
<th>(\ldots)</th>
<th>(S_n)</th>
<th>(T_1)</th>
<th>(T_2)</th>
<th>(v_{s,i}')</th>
<th>(v_s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>\ldots</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>\ldots</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>(V_{s}')</td>
<td>(V_s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>\ldots</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>(V_{s}')</td>
<td>(-V_s')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>\ldots</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>(V_s')</td>
<td>(V_{s}')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>\ldots</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>(V_{s}')</td>
<td>(-V_s')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2n+1</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>\ldots</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>(V_{s}')</td>
<td>(V_s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2n+2</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>\ldots</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>(V_{s}')+(V'_s)</td>
<td>(V_{s}')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2n+3</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>\ldots</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>(V_{s}')+(V'_s)</td>
<td>(-V_s'-V_{s}')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2n+4</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>\ldots</td>
<td>\ldots</td>
<td>\ldots</td>
<td>\ldots</td>
<td>\ldots</td>
<td>\ldots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>\ldots</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>(\sum V_{s}')</td>
<td>(\sum V_{s}')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2n+1</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>\ldots</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>(\sum V_{s}')</td>
<td>(-\sum V_{s}')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2n+2</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>\ldots</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>(\sum V_{s}')</td>
<td>(\sum V_{s}')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2n+3</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>\ldots</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>(\sum V_{s}')</td>
<td>(-\sum V_{s}')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>\ldots</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>(\sum V_{s}')</td>
<td>(-\sum V_{s}')</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The equivalent circuits of the converter is shown in Fig. 3(a) in both operation modes are shown in Fig. 3.

2.1 First Operating Mode (ST Mode)

In this operating mode, both switches $S_1$ and $S'_1$ are on that indicate ST state. In this mode, diode $D$ is in reverse bias and off. The equivalent circuit of this operating mode is shown in Fig. 3(b). In this operating mode, by applying KVL in Fig. 3(b), the following equations are obtained:

$$v_{L_1} = V_1 + V_{C_2}$$
$$v_{L_2} = V_{C_1}$$

where $V_{C_1}$, $V_{C_2}$, and $V_1$ are average voltages across capacitors $C_1$, $C_2$, and DC voltage source, respectively. $V_{L_1}$ and $V_{L_2}$ are voltages across inductors $L_1$, and $L_2$, respectively.

In the first operating mode, the output voltage of Z-source network is zero.

2.2 Second Operating Mode (Non-ST Mode)

In this operating mode, $S_1$ or $S'_1$ is on that indicate non-ST state. In this mode, diode $D$ is conducting. The equivalent circuit of this operating mode is shown in Fig. 3(c). In this operating mode, by applying KVL in Fig. 3(c), the following equations are obtained:

$$v_{L_1} = V_1 - V_{C_1}$$
$$v_{L_2} = -V_{C_2}$$

In this mode, the output voltage of Z-source network is equal to maximum value. Maximum output voltage of Z-source network ($V_1'$) is obtained from the following equation:

$$V_1' = V_{C_1} + V_{C_2}$$

2.2.1 Boost Factor of Quasi-Z-source Network

According to voltage balance law, the average voltage across an inductor is zero. Putting inductors $L_1$ and $L_2$ average voltage equal to zero, the following results are obtained:

$$V_{C_1} = \frac{1 - D_{ST}}{1 - 2D_{ST}} V_1$$
$$V_{C_2} = \frac{D_{ST}}{1 - 2D_{ST}} V_1$$

By substituting the values of $V_{C_1}$ and $V_{C_2}$ from (12) and (13) into (11), the maximum output voltage of quasi-Z-source is calculated as follows:

$$V_1' = \frac{1}{1 - 2D_{ST}} V_1$$

Table 2 indicates the values of Z-source network output voltage for states of switches $S_1$ and $S'_1$.

2.2.2 Quasi-Z-Source Component Design

During ST state, the inductors voltage is positive and inductors currents increases linearly. The task of the inductor is to limit the current ripple during ST state [26]. The following equation is always valid:

$$v_L = L \frac{di_L}{dt}$$

Considering (8) and (15), equation between voltages across inductor and current through them in ST mode is obtained as follows:

<p>| Table 1: Switches states and Z-source network output voltage value. |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Quasi-Z-Source Output Voltage</th>
<th>ON Switches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>$V_1'$ (non-ST)</td>
<td>$S_1$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0 (non-ST)</td>
<td>$S'_1$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0 (ST)</td>
<td>$S_1, S'_1$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 3 Quasi-Z-source converter; a) Power circuit; b) Equivalent circuit in ST operation mode; and c) Equivalent circuit in non-ST operation mode.
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\[ L \frac{\Delta i_L}{D_{st} T_s} = V_{C_1} \]  

(16)

In above equation, \( \Delta i_L \) is inductors current ripples.

Regarding to (16), the value of inductance is calculated as follows:

\[ L = \frac{V_{C_1} D_{st} T_s}{\Delta i_L} \]  

(17)

Considering \( T_s = \frac{1}{f_s} \), the following result is obtained:

\[ L = \frac{V_{C_1} D_{st} f_s}{\Delta i_L} \]  

(18)

The capacitor absorbs the current ripple and achieves quite a stable voltage [27]. The inductor is charged by the capacitor during ST time. By applying KCL in Fig. 3(b), the following equation is obtained:

\[ i_{c2} = -i_{c1} \]  

(19)

where \( i_{c1} \) and \( i_{c2} \) are currents of \( L_1 \) and \( C_2 \), respectively.

The following equation is always valid:

\[ i_c = C \frac{dv_c}{dt} \]  

(20)

Consideration (19) and (20), the following result is obtained:

\[ C \frac{\Delta v_c}{D_{st} T_s} = I_L \]  

(21)

In above equation, \( I_L \) is average currents through inductor and \( \Delta v_c \) is voltages ripples across capacitor.

Considering (21), the capacitor value is obtained as follows:

\[ C = \frac{D_{st} I_L}{f_s \Delta v_c} \]  

(22)

3 Calculation of the Amplitudes of DC Voltage Sources

To generate output steps with high number without additional inverters, asymmetric topologies can be applied. An appropriate select of voltage asymmetry through cells can generate a various combination of voltage levels and delete redundancies. For the proposed structure, three different processes for designation of amplitudes of the DC voltage sources are presented.

3.1 First Proposed Strategy

In this strategy, the values of DC voltage sources in every cell are same. In the per-unit system, the base value is the first DC voltage source \( V_{11} \) and we have:

\[ V_{31} = V_{11} = V_{dc} \]  

(23)

To produce all steps in the output, the normalized values of DC voltage sources are written as follows:

First cell:

\[ V_{3i} = V_{11} = V_{dc}, \quad i = 2, \ldots, n_1 \]  

(24)

Second cell:

\[ V_{2i} = V_{21} + 2 \sum_{j=1}^{n_1} V_{kj}, \quad i = 2, \ldots, n_2 \]  

(25)

Third cell:

\[ V_{3i} = V_{31} + 2 \sum_{j=1}^{n_1} \sum_{j=1}^{n_2} V_{kj}, \quad i = 2, \ldots, n_3 \]  

(26)

In general, for the \( m \)-th unit:

\[
V_{3m} = V_{m1} + 2 \sum_{j=1}^{n_1} \sum_{j=1}^{n_2} \cdots \sum_{j=1}^{n_{m-1}} V_{kj}, \quad i = 2, \ldots, n_m
\]  

(27)

The maximum output voltage can be written as follows:

\[
N_{step} = \prod_{i=1}^{m} (2n_i + 1)
\]  

\[ = (2n_1 + 1)(2n_2 + 1) \times \cdots \times (2n_m + 1) \]  

(28)

3.2 Second Proposed Strategy

In the second strategy, the normalized values for DC voltage sources in every cell are determined as follows:

First cell:

\[ V_{11} = V_{dc} \]

\[ V_{3i} = 2V_{11} = 2V_{dc}, \quad i = 2, \ldots, n_1 \]  

(30)

Second cell:

\[ V_{2i} = V_{11} + 2 \sum_{j=1}^{n_1} V_{kj}, \quad i = 2, \ldots, n_2 \]  

(31)

In general, for the \( m \)-th cell:

\[ V_{3m} = V_{m1} + 2 \sum_{j=1}^{n_1} \sum_{j=1}^{n_2} \cdots \sum_{j=1}^{n_{m-1}} V_{kj}, \quad i = 2, \ldots, n_m \]  

(32)

In the following equation, the number of provided steps
in the output voltage is written:

\[ N_{\text{step},2} = \prod_{i=1}^{k} (4n_j - 1) \] (34)

### 3.3 Third Proposed Strategy

To determine amplitudes of DC voltage sources in the third strategy, binary method in every cell is used that leads to an exponential increase in the number of total output steps.

In the \( m \)-th cell, the DC voltage sources are calculated as follows:

\[ V_{m1} = V_{11} + 2\sum_{i=1}^{m-1} \sum_{j=1}^{n_i} V_j = \prod_{i=1}^{m-1} (2n_i - 1) V_{dc} \] (35)
\[ V_{mi} = 2^{i-1} V_{m1}, \quad i = 2, \ldots, n_m \] (36)

Determination of number of output voltage steps is as follows:

\[ N_{\text{step},3} = \prod_{i=1}^{k} (2n_i - 1) \] (37)

By selecting different values of duty ratio for quasi-Z-source network in the asymmetric conditions, it is possible to propose new strategies that lead to low number of elements. Due to application of proposed topology in photovoltaic systems, value of duty ratio is determined through maximum power tracking control system and as a result, availability to different values of duty ratio is difficult because these values depend on features and environmental conditions of photovoltaic cells.

### 4 Optimized Topologies

To generate specified number of levels in output voltage, different arrangement of proposed structure with different number of element can be used. In this section, optimized structures with different objectives for the proposed topology are investigated.

#### 4.1 Optimized Topology With Constant Number of Switches to Achieve Maximum Number of Voltage Levels

The favorable goal in a multilevel converter is providing the high number of steps by using low number of switches. With constant consideration of number of switches (\( N_{\text{switch}} \)), determination of maximum number of steps for output voltage is necessary.

By considering a series of 2 sub-multilevel inverters for the proposed structure and \( n_i \) quasi-Z-source networks and \( n_i \) DC voltage sources for each of them \((i = 1, 2, \ldots, k)\), the following equation can be written:

\[ N_{\text{switch}} = 2(n_1 + n_2 + \cdots + n_k) + 4k \] (38)

The number of steps for voltages is obtained from (28), (34), and (37) for specification of DC voltage sources in three proposed strategy. By using these equations and (38), the maximized value for product of the numbers (whose summation is constant) is available when correctness of the following equation is acceptable:

\[ n_1 = n_2 = \cdots = n_k = n \] (39)

By substituting above equation in (38), the following result is obtained:

\[ k = \frac{N_{\text{switch}}}{2n + 4} \] (40)

The value of \( n \) must be determined and the number of switches \( N_{\text{switch}} \) is constant. By substituting (14) into (28), (34), and (37), the steps of voltage with maximum number for three strategies are obtained as follows, respectively:

\[ N_{\text{step},1} = (2n + 1)^k \] (41)
\[ N_{\text{step},2} = (4n - 1)^k \] (42)
\[ N_{\text{step},3} = (2^{n+1} - 1)^k \] (43)

By substituting value of \( k \) from (40) into the above relations, following results are obtained:

\[ N_{\text{step},1} = \left[ \frac{1}{2n+4} \right]^{1/N_{\text{switch}}} \] (44)
\[ N_{\text{step},2} = \left[ \frac{1}{2n+4} \right]^{1/N_{\text{switch}}} \] (45)
\[ N_{\text{step},3} = \left[ \frac{1}{2n+4} \right]^{1/N_{\text{switch}}} \] (46)

In Fig. 4(a), the changes of \( (2^{n+1} - 1)^{1/2n+4} \), \( (4n - 1)^{1/2n+4} \), and \( (2n + 1)^{1/2n+4} \) against \( n \) are shown. It is obvious that for the 1st and 2nd strategies, the maximum number of steps for voltage is provided for \( n = 2 \). In other words, a topology with 2 quasi-Z-source networks, 2 DC voltage sources and 4 switches in every basic cell can generate maximum steps for voltage while minimum number of switches is used. In the 3rd strategy, the maximum steps of voltage is theoretically provided for \( n = \infty \). In other words, for a constant number of switches a topology with one basic cell and available switches is favorable. It should be noticed that the number of elements is integer. Hence, if the number is not an integer, then the nearest integer is the answer to the problem.

#### 4.2 Optimized Topology With Constant Number of Quasi-Z-Source Networks and DC Voltage Sources to Achieve Maximum Number of Voltage Levels

By considering unchangeable number of DC voltage
sources equal to $N_{\text{source}}$, the objective is finding a structure with capability of generating high number of voltage levels. By assuming that the proposed topology has a series of $k$ sub-multilevel inverters, each of them has $n_i$ DC voltage sources (for $i = 1, 2, \ldots, k$). Hence, we have:

$$N_{\text{source}} = \sum_{i=1}^{k} n_i = n_1 + n_2 + \cdots + n_k$$

(47)

In the following, the number of DC sources is calculated by using (39):

$$N_{\text{source}} = n \times k$$

(48)

By substituting the value of $k$ from (48) into (41), (42), and (43), the maximum number of steps of voltage for three strategies is provided as follows:

$$N_{\text{step},1} = \left[ (2n+1)^{1/n} \right]^{N_{\text{source}}}$$

(49)

$$N_{\text{step},2} = \left[ (4n-1)^{1/n} \right]^{N_{\text{source}}}$$

(50)

$$N_{\text{step},3} = \left[ (2^{n-1} - 1)^{1/n} \right]^{N_{\text{source}}}$$

(51)

In Fig. 4(b), the change of $(2^{n-1} - 1)^n$, $(4n-1)^n$ and $(2n+1)^n$ against $n$ is shown. It is obvious that the higher number of steps of voltage for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd strategies are achieved for $n = 1$. Hence, a topology has cells with one DC voltage source and one quasi-Z-source network generates high number of steps for $v_o$ with low number of used DC sources. It is noticeable that the suggested structure is fundamentally a traditional cascaded multilevel inverter with one quasi-Z-source converter.

4.3 Optimized Topology for Constant Number of Steps of Voltage With Low Number of Power Switches

By considering the number of steps of voltage $v_o$ equal to $N_{\text{step}}$ and to generate steps of voltage, determination of structure with low number of switches is possible. This is obvious that in the basic cell, the high number of steps of voltage is provided for equal number of power switches. Hence, by considering (39)–(43) and the number of power switches in every cell equal to $n$, the total numbers of switches $N_{\text{switch}}$ in the three strategies is calculated as follows:

$$N_{\text{switch},1} = (2n+4)k = \ln\left( N_{\text{step}} \right) \times \frac{2n+4}{\ln(2n+1)}$$

(52)
5 Control Method

There are many kinds of modulation methods for multilevel inverters [28-31]. The objective of some of them is minimization of total harmonic distortion and elimination of harmonics [32-33]. In this paper, the level-shifted sinusoidal pulse-width modulation (LS-SPWM) is used [34-35]. The general layout of this controlling method for producing various voltage levels is shown in Fig. 5(a), and the waveforms of the method for producing 5-level are shown in Fig. 5(b). Fig. 5(c) shows the control block diagram of the proposed structure. In this controlling method for producing \( N_{\text{step}} \) levels at the output voltage, \( N_{\text{step}} \) triangular carrier wave with frequency \( f_c \) is considered. The reference signal \( (u_{\text{ref}}) \) is a sinusoidal waveform with frequency \( f_{\text{ref}} \).

\[
N_{\text{switch,2}} = (2n + 4)k = \ln(N_{\text{step}}) \times \frac{2n + 4}{\ln(4n - 1)}
\]

\[
N_{\text{switch,3}} = (2n + 4)k = \ln(N_{\text{step}}) \times \frac{2n + 4}{\ln(2^{n+3} - 1)}
\]

In Fig. 4(c), the change of \( \frac{2n + 4}{\ln(2^n - 1)} \) against \( n \) is shown. At the low point of presented shapes in Fig. 4(c) and for a constant value of \( N_{\text{step}} \), the numbers of switches will be minimized. Hence, \( n = 2 \) is the lowest number of switches for achievement to \( N_{\text{step}} \) voltage levels in the 1st and 2nd strategies. In theory, the optimized amount for the 3rd strategy is achieved for \( n = \infty \).
Triangular carrier waves above the axis are indicated with \( u^u_{\text{ca},j} \) and below the axis are indicated with \( u^\beta_{\text{ca},j} \),
\[
(j = 1, 2, \ldots, \frac{N_{\text{step}} - 1}{2}).
\]

If the reference signal \( (u_{\text{ref}}) \) is greater than the triangular carrier wave above the axis \( (u^u_{\text{ca},j}) \), the comparator output is \( 1 \), otherwise is \( 0 \). If reference signal \( (u_{\text{ref}}) \) is greater than the triangular carrier wave below the axis \( (u^\beta_{\text{ca},j}) \), the comparator output is \( 0 \), otherwise is \(-1\), which is as follows:
\[
u^u_{\text{out},j} = \begin{cases} 
1 & \text{if } u_{\text{ref}} \geq u^u_{\text{ca},j} \\
0 & \text{otherwise}
\end{cases} \quad (55)
\]
\[
u^\beta_{\text{out},j} = \begin{cases} 
0 & \text{if } u_{\text{ref}} \geq u^\beta_{\text{ca},j} \\
-1 & \text{otherwise}
\end{cases} \quad (56)
\]

In above relations, \( u^u_{\text{ca},j} \) and \( u^\beta_{\text{ca},j} \) are comparators output for carrier waves above the axis and below the axis, respectively.

Obtained results from (55) and (7) are added as:
\[
u_{\text{com}} = \sum_{j=1}^{N_{\text{step}}-1} \left(u^u_{\text{out},j} + u^\beta_{\text{out},j}\right) \quad (57)
\]

In above relation, \( \nu_{\text{com}} \) is the composite signal. Switching signals for each power electronic switches can be obtained by \( \nu_{\text{com}} \) and logical circuits according to converter look-up table.

In order to establish ST state for quasi-Z-source converter, the simple boost control method is used [36-37]. The main control idea for quasi-Z-source converter is the conversion of conventional zero states to ST state without changing active switching states. For instance for establishing ST state for first quasi-Z-source converter in the first basic unit (QZS\(_1\)), when the switch \( S_{11}^1 \) is on, the switch \( S_{11}^1 \) for ST duty cycle duration (\( T_{ST} \)) is being on, so that ST state can be provided for the converter. In this method, one straight line \( (V_F) \) is used to control ST state time interval. If the magnitude of the upper carrier signal of \( u^u_{\text{ca}} \) is greater than the magnitude of \( V_F \) \( (u^u_{\text{ca}} > V_F) \) then basic unit is in the ST state.

Due to this fact that for each quasi-Z-source network can control value of duty ratio; so, control system of each network should adjust its DC output voltage in the desired value. This issue can be done by using close loop control of output voltage. In close loop control, at any moment (due to sample time) feedback is taken from output voltage and at any moment value of duty cycle is updated and this issue brings output voltage of converter to value of reference voltage. The failure to control can lead to improper output voltage and impaired performance of proposed topology.

6 Comparison
In the multilevel inverters, rating of power switches is one of the most important challenges. Total cost of implementation of a multilevel inverter is directly related to rating of voltage and current of power switches [38]. In the proposed topology, rating of current of each switch depends on current of load and is considered equal to it. Hence due to load of proposed topology, current of load should be calculated and appropriate switch should be selected. In the references and literatures, two concepts about rating of voltage are discussed. The first concept is peak inverse voltage (PIV) and the second concept is standing voltage (SV).

In the proposed topology, PIV for all switches is obtained as follows:
\[
PIV = \sum_{j=1}^{V_{\text{switch},j}} (N_{\text{step}} - 1)
\]

where \( V_{\text{switch},j} \) is peak inverse voltage of the \( j \)-th switch.

In the proposed topology, total PIV for each three proposed strategies is calculated as follows:
\[
PIV = V_{\text{dc}} \left( N_{\text{step}} - 1 \right) \quad (59)
\]

According to [15], the above-mentioned equation can be considered as maximum standing voltage of switches. In the proposed topology, total standing voltage (TSV) is calculated as follows:
\[
TSV = PIV_S + PIV_F \quad (60)
\]

where \( PIV_S \) is related to PIV of available switches in the units and \( PIV_F \) is related to PIV of available switches in the full-bridge segment.

By substituting (59) in (60), TSV of proposed topology is obtained as follows:
\[
TSV = 2V_{\text{dc}} \left( N_{\text{step}} - 1 \right) \quad N_{\text{step}} \geq 2
\]

The per-unit value of TSV is defined as follows:
\[
TSV_{\text{pu}} = \frac{TSV}{V_{\text{dc}}} = 2 \left( N_{\text{step}} - 1 \right) \quad N_{\text{step}} \geq 2
\]

Fig. 6 shows comparison of TSV between proposed topology and presented multilevel inverters in [14-15]. According to this figure, the value of TSV for the proposed topology is not higher than TSV of presented topologies in [14-15].

Fig. 7 shows comparison of number of used switches in the proposed topology with three proposed strategies and presented topologies in [14-15]. According to this figure, to have same voltage level, number of switches for the proposed topology in each three strategies is lower; so, gate driver circuits and power losses will be
of power switch in the quasi-Z-source network, high number of passive elements in the proposed topology is justifiable.

7 Simulation Results

To investigate operation of proposed multilevel converter based on quasi impedance-source network, simulation results using PSCAD/EMTDC software for single phase topology with 25 levels are provided. Power circuit of this topology is shown in Fig. 8. In this figure for determining DC voltage sources, the first proposed strategy is used [39].

The proposed topology is designed for generating 25 levels with frequency of 50Hz. In the simulation, output load is resistive/inductive with values of $R = 107 \Omega$ and $L = 55$ mH. Values of other parameters in the simulation are presented in Table 3. In Table 4, switching states of inverter are shown for producing different voltage levels. The inverter is able for generating all odd and even voltage levels.

By using presented values in Table 3 and (14), maximum value of voltage in the output of both quasi-Z-networks in the first basic cell is 10 V. Moreover, maximum value of voltage in the output of both quasi-Z-networks in the second basic cell is 50 V. Figs. 9(a) and 9(b) show waveforms of output voltage in the quasi-impedance networks for both basic cells. According to these figures, output voltage of quasi-Z-networks in the ST state is zero and in the non-ST state is non-zero. Figs. 9(c) and 9(d) show maximum output voltage of quasi-Z-source converter in the first and second basic cell, respectively. According to these figures, maximum output voltages of quasi-Z-source converter in the first and second cell are 10 V and 50 V, respectively.

Fig. 10 shows simulation results for proposed multilevel inverter. According to this figure, output voltage of each basic unit ($v_1$ & $v_2$) always has a zero or positive value. Output ac voltage of full-bridge inverter ($v_{out1}$ & $v_{out2}$) are in series with each other and combined output voltage ($v_o$) is sum of the output voltages of full-bridge converters. As shown in Fig. 10, output voltage is a sinusoidal voltage with frequency of 50 Hz which has 25 levels from -120 V to +120 V. It is noticeable that there is a phase difference between waveforms of output voltage and output current. The reason of this subject is inductive characteristic of output load. Moreover, output voltage has sinusoidal waveform with low value of total harmonic distortion [40].

8 Experimental Results

In this section, the experimental results of proposed basic unit structure composed of two voltage sources and two quasi-Z-source converters (Fig 11) are presented. The first proposed algorithm is employed to determine the magnitude of DC voltage sources. The parameters of base unit are illustrated in Table 5. In
Table 3 The values of parameters in the simulation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$L_1 = L_2$</td>
<td>5 mH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$C_1 = C_2$</td>
<td>600 μF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$f_{ref}$</td>
<td>50 Hz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$f_s$</td>
<td>20 kHz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$D_{ST}$</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$V_{11} = V_{12}$</td>
<td>8 V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$V_{21} = V_{22}$</td>
<td>40 V</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

order to produce 5 levels at the output voltage, the explained control method is used. To establish ST state for quasi-Z-source converter, the simple boost control method is used.
The duty cycle of ST for quasi-Z-source converter is assumed as $D_{ST} = 0.25$ and the value of each DC voltage sources are 50 V. Then according to (14), the maximum voltage at the output of each quasi-Z-source converter will be 100 V.

Figs. 12(a) and 12(b) show output voltage waveforms of both quasi-Z-source converters. As can be seen from these figures, the output voltages of both quasi-Z-source converters are equal and the maximum values of them are approximately 100 V. It can be observed that DC-link voltage in ST state is zero and in the non-ST state is equal to 100 V. Fig. 12(c) shows output voltage of cascaded structure ($v_{o}^{'}$) for three-level voltage. The waveform of full-bridge output voltage or load voltage ($v_{o}$) for five-level voltage is shown in Fig. 12(d). The load voltage and current are shown in Fig. 12(e). The phase difference between the load voltage and current is due to inductive characteristic of load. The small difference between the experimental and theoretical results is due to the non-ideal of components.
9 Conclusion

In this paper, a new topology for cascaded multilevel inverter based on quasi-Z-source converter was proposed. Due to the use of quasi-Z-source converter in the proposed topology, the magnitude of DC voltage sources can be increased. As a result, no additional DC-DC converter was needed. In the proposed topology, the magnitude of DC voltage sources can be increased by increasing the ST duty cycle of quasi-Z-source converter. As an example, for $D_{ST} = 0.25$, voltage gain of the proposed topology was 2. In this paper, the quasi-Z-source structure in two operation modes of ST and non-ST, was analyzed and the equations of the voltages across inductors, capacitors and gain voltage was calculated. Also, the values of components in quasi-Z-source network were designed. In proposed topology, due to short circuit capability and increased DC voltage source magnitude by quasi-Z-source converter, the reliability of proposed topology is increased and the output voltage is not limited to the DC voltage source.

To provide a large number of output steps without increasing the number of inverters, asymmetric structures was used and three algorithms to determine the magnitude of DC voltage sources was proposed. The proposed topology has been optimized for various purposes of obtaining minimum switch numbers and DC voltage sources, and maximum numbers of voltage level. Also, to provide output steps and ST state for quasi-Z-source converter, proposed control method was explained. The operation and performance of the proposed topology has been verified with simulation and experimental results. It was shown that the proposed topology has a good performance.
References


E. Babaei received the Ph.D. degree in Electrical Engineering from University of Tabriz, in 2007. In 2007, he joined the Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering, University of Tabriz. He has been Professor since 2015. He is the author and co-author of more than 460 journal and conference papers. He also holds 23 patents in the area of Power Electronics. His current research interests include the analysis, modeling, design, and control of Power Electronic Converters and their applications, Renewable Energy Sources, and FACTS Devices. Prof. Babaei has been the Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Electrical Engineering of the University of Tabriz, since 2013. He is also currently an Associate Editor of the IEEE Transactions on Industrial Electronics and IEEE Transactions on Power Electronics. He has been the Corresponding Guest Editor for different special issues in the IEEE Transactions on Industrial Electronics. In addition, Prof. Babaei has been the Track Chair, organizer of different special sessions and Technical Committee member in most important international conferences organized in the field of Power Electronics. Several times, he was the recipient of the Best Researcher Award from the University of Tabriz. Prof. Babaei has been included in the Top One Percent of the World’s Scientists and Academics according to Thomson Reuters’ list in 2015, 2016 and 2017.

M. Shadnam Zarbil received the B.Sc. degree (first class honors) in Electrical Power Engineering from the University of Azarbaijan Shahid Madani, Tabriz, Iran, in 2013. He received the M.Sc. degree in Electrical Power Engineering (Power Electronics and Systems) from the University of Tabriz, Tabriz, Iran, in 2015. Mr. Shadnam is currently working toward the Ph.D. degree in Power Engineering from the Iran University of Science and Technology (IUST).

E. Shokati Asl was born in Ardabil, Iran, in 1990. He received the B.Sc. degree and the M.Sc. degree (first class honors) in Power Engineering from the Department of Electrical Engineering, University of Tabriz, Tabriz, Iran, in 2012 and 2015, respectively, where he is currently working toward the Ph.D. degree in Power Engineering. Since 2014, he has been a Member of the Talented Office with the University of Tabriz. In addition, he has been invited lecturer in university of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil, Iran since 2017. Mr. Shokati Asl is the author and co-author of several journal and conference papers. His research interests include analysis and design of power electronic converters, renewable energy systems, Z-source converters, and reliability analysis of power electronic converters. Mr. Shokati Asl received the Education Prize once and Research Prize twice from the National Elites Foundation in 2014, 2016 and 2017, respectively. Moreover, he received the Elite Student Award and Dr. Ali Polad Award from the University of Tabriz in 2016 and 2017, respectively.

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