

Photovoltaic System Reconfiguration strategy for mismatch condition

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Abstract—Power generation efficiency of photovoltaic(PV) system is reduced significantly under partial shading or solar cell damage conditions. This efficiency losses affected by turning on bypass diode of PV panels, which called mismatch losses. Reconfiguration technology to reconfigure electrical series or parallel connection among PV panels can maximize power generation. Recently, an efficient reconfiguration method of PV panel connection to optimize power generation is proposed. The method first list candidate configurations and applies precise power simulations to the candidates. However, some of candidates might not be realized by given PV panels and the paper does not show any systematic way to identify such a feasibility. In this paper, we propose a very fast algorithm to check the feasibility with high accuracy.

Index Terms—Photovoltaic system, mismatched power loss, reconfiguration, dynamical reconfiguration.

I. INTRODUCTION

As constant fossil energy generation is increasing the crisis of fossil fuel depletion and serious pollution problems for the environment, research and utilization on a green and renewable energy have become necessary for sustainable society and environment. Photovoltaic (PV) energy has received a significant attention since it is unlimited and easy to be scaled up. Thanks to extensive technology and research on photovoltaic energy generation, large scale photovoltaic energy generation systems have been deployed into many practical applications. However, PV arrays are sensitive to shading and PV cell's fault or aging. This means that when PV cells or modules do not uniformly generate power or experience different irradiance conditions from one another, the PV array is in mismatch condition and could not efficiently generate power. In addition, the photovoltaic arrays under mismatched conditions will accelerate the aging and heating of PV cells and cause a short circuit of photovoltaic cells to further damage the PV array. In order to maximize power generation and also avoid damaging PV cells, we propose an algorithm that can reconfigure photovoltaic arrays.

In this paper, we use non-uniform irradiance levels to represent mismatch condition and analyze the efficiency of a PV system. Photovoltaic arrays operating in mismatch conditions could not efficiently generate power, and reconfiguration of panel connection has been widely investigated to solve this problem [2].

Some of works proposed optimized or efficient algorithms to reconfigure the connection of PV cells [3] [4]. However, these works assume a full reconfiguration ability among PV cells. In general, a PV array is a connection of multiple PV panels, each PV panel has multiple PV modules, and each PV module consists of multiple PV cells. One typical PV panel has 3 PV modules with 24 PV cells. To realize reconfiguration in PV cell level, a new PV panel architecture is required.

Recently, as practical solutions, reconfiguration in PV panels have been investigated [5] [10]. One PV panel typically has two (plus and minus) terminals, and a PV array is configured by connecting PV panels in series and/or parallel. Such a configuration is also realized using a switch among PV panels, and reconfigurations in PV panel level can be regarded as practical solutions. However, the reconfiguration in PV panel level is more difficult than that in PV cell level. PV modules in the same PV panel can be individually bypassed by bypass diodes when some mismatch condition occurs, and it causes multiple maximal power points (MPPs) for one PV panel.

A PV panel level reconfiguration using genetic algorithm is proposed in [5]. Though this can generate a new configuration, computing cost is too significant and the algorithm cannot generate the best configuration precisely. A fast reconfiguration strategy for minimizing power losses is presented in [10]. In this strategy, candidates for PV array configurations are first listed by some fast estimation method, and, for each candidates, precise power simulations are applied. However, some candidate configurations might not be feasible, that is, it is impossible to realize a designated PV array configuration with given PV panels, and there is no description of a systematic way to identify the feasibility.

In this paper, we propose an algorithm to identify feasibility for a given configuration with less computational time and high accuracy.

II. PHOTOVOLTAIC ARRAY

In this paper, we use the following model of PV arrays, modules, strings and panels as showed in Fig. 1. A PV array is formed by several parallel connected (PV) strings, and a string is formed by several series-connected PV panels. A PV panel is formed by three PV modules. And each bypass diode is connected in parallel with a module.

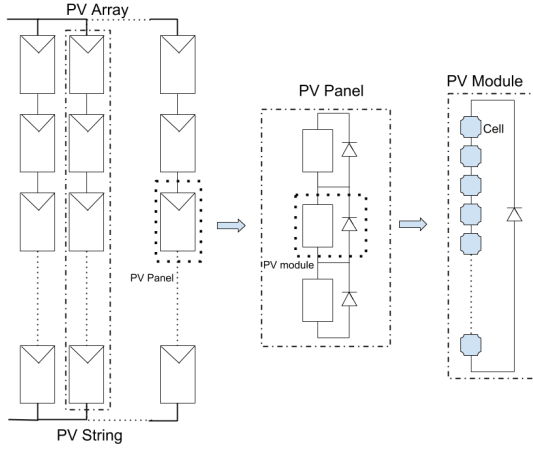


Fig. 1: PV arrays, strings, and panels.

Fig.2a shows I-V curves for PV panels. PV panel generates a currents according to a provided control voltage within some range. PV cells in a PV panel may have different conditions (irradiance or fault) and hence have different upper limits for their generated currents. Therefore, for lower control voltage, only PV cells that can generate higher currents can work and the other PV cells do not generate current with their bypass diodes switching on. As a result, PV panel might have multiple maximal power points (MPPs, points where power curve has extreme values). Fig.2b and 2c show I-V curves for series and parallel connections of two PV panels. The series connection accepts wider range of control voltage, and the parallel connection can generate higher current.

When understanding complete I-V characteristics of some parallel and/or series connection of PV panels, we may need I-V characteristics of the PV panels. However, to find out the (near) maximum generated power, it is enough to considers some restricted information including maximal power points (MPPs), a short circuit current, an open circuit voltage. These values form a fingerprint of the connection.

In mismatched conditions, the power versus voltage (P-V) curve of each panel shows multiple MPPs (maximal power points). We refer to a MPP by a pair (V_{mpp}, I_{mpp}) where V_{mpp} and I_{mpp} are the voltage and the current that give a maximal power, respectively. The algorithm in [6] analyzes the current versus voltage (I-V) curves of panels and finds MPPs of each panel in mismatched conditions.

III. RECONFIGURATION ALGORITHM

A. Overview of the algorithm

In this section, we describe the overview of the Fast reconfiguration algorithm in [10]. First, the reconfiguration algorithm determines MPPs for PV modules in the mismatched condition by using algorithms in [6] [7] [9]. As an example, we consider a PV panel where nine panels are connected in three strings. We assume that, in this example, the reconfiguration algorithm finds MPPs given in Table I. After that, the reconfiguration algorithm generates candidates of current assignments,

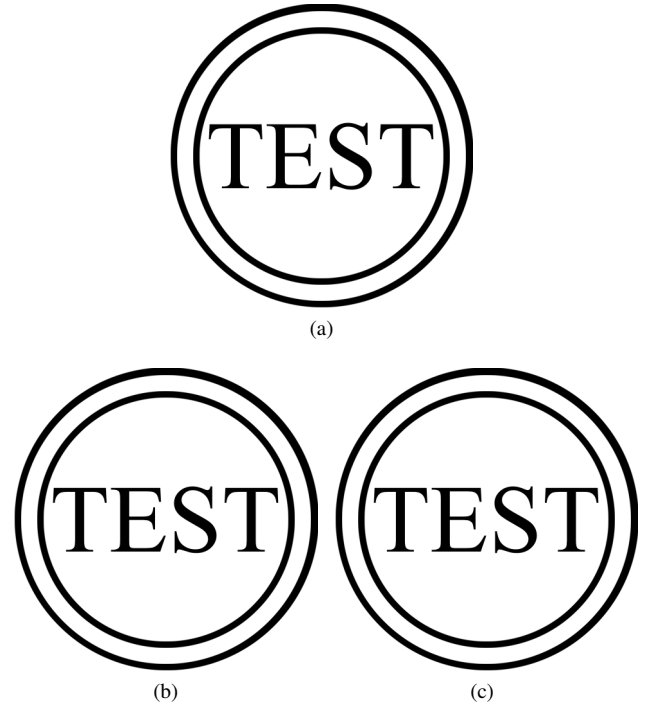


Fig. 2

where the current assignment specifies a current of each string. The reconfiguration algorithm treats the current of each MPP as a current candidate for string, and constructs a current assignment by assigning a current candidate to each string. The reconfiguration algorithm generates current assignments by considering all combinations of current candidates for string. Then, for each current assignment, the reconfiguration algorithm computes the number of working modules in each string. We define a configuration as a combination of a current assignment and the number of working modules (Q_{M_n}) in each string. MPP candidates are presented in (1) and number of working modules of MPP candidates are presented in (2), respectively.

$$MPP \text{ candidates} = [\{0.5, 0.5, 2\}, \{0.5, 2, 2\}, \{2, 2, 2\}, \{2, 2, 3\}] \quad (1)$$

$$Q_{M_n} = [\{8, 8, 8\}, \{7, 7, 7\}, \{5, 5, 5\}, \{4, 4, 4\}] \quad (2)$$

By this algorithm, we obtain a set of candidate configurations. Since we can estimate the generated power of each candidate configuration, we can select the candidate configuration that maximizes the generated power. The general steps of Fast reconfiguration strategy as showed in Fig. 3. The previous estimation can not give precise reconfiguration answer. This algorithm lists some candidate configurations (in addition to the maximum one) and for each candidate configuration it will executes a time consuming and precise power simulation. Considering there are some errors in previous estimation, this algorithm is not efficient for finding the best configuration.

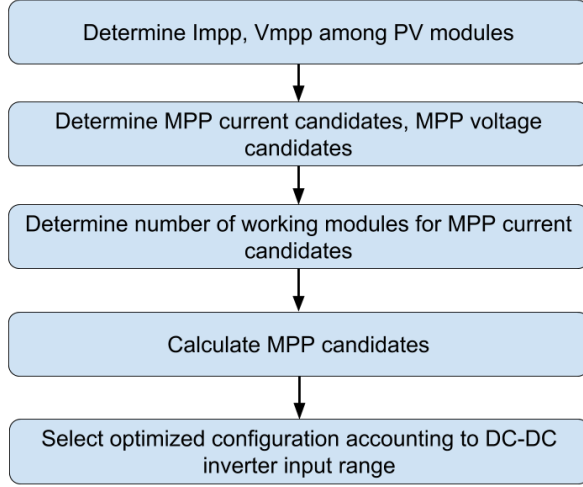


Fig. 3: Flowchart of reconfiguration algorithm in [10].

TABLE I

DATASET OF PARTIAL-SHADING PV ARRAY			
Panels	Vmpp(V)	Impp (A)	MPP(W)
P1	[0, 2.9, 11.4]	[0, 0.5, 2]	[None, 1.5, 22.8]
P2	[2.9, 17.1, 17.1]	[0.5, 3, 3]	[1.5, 51.3, 51.3]
P3	[2.9, 2.9, 2.9]	[0.5, 0.5, 0.5]	[1.5, 1.5, 1.5]
P4	[0, 11.4, 11.4]	[0, 2, 2]	[None, 22.8, 22.8]
P5	[0, 2.9, 11.4]	[0, 0.5, 2]	[None, 1.5, 22.8]
P6	[2.9, 11.4, 11.4]	[0.5, 2, 2]	[1.5, 22.8, 22.8]
P7	[2.9, 11.4, 17.1]	[0.5, 2, 3]	[1.5, 22.8, 51.3]
P8	[11.4, 11.4, 11.4]	[2, 2, 2]	[22.8, 22.8, 22.8]
P9	[2.9, 11.4, 17.1]	[0.5, 2, 3]	[1.5, 22.8, 51.3]

B. Feasibility Problem

To execute a power simulation, we have to assign panels to each string to realize a candidate configuration. However, the way is not given in [10] and some candidate configurations are infeasible. For an configuration example $\{0.5A, 0.5A, 2A\}$, there are 8 PV modules working on each string. According to Table I, for a string current on 2A at least need 4 panels, remaining panels can not provide enough PV module working on 0.5A for another two strings. Of course we can compute it by using an exhaustive search. However, it is time-consuming. So, we need an algorithm to efficiently identify feasibility of a configuration and realize the configuration if it is feasible.

IV. AN ALGORITHM TO IDENTIFY FEASIBILITY

In this section, we propose an algorithm to identify feasibility.

A. The Input And Output Of Algorithm

First, we summarize the input and output of our algorithm. The input of our algorithm is information of a PV array and a configuration. The information of a PV array is given as a set of panels and the number of working modules in each panel for each current candidate. Table II shows the information of a PV panel given in Table I. For example, this table shows panel P2 includes three, two, and two modules that work in current

0.5A, 2A, and 3A, respectively. Recall that a configuration is a combination of a current assignment and the number of working modules in each string, and a current assignment specifies a current for each string. The output of our algorithm is feasibility of the given configuration. That is, the algorithm determines whether there exists assignment of panels to strings that realizes the configuration. Recall that a configuration is

TABLE II: Information of a PV array

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
0.5A	2	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3
2A	1	2	0	2	1	2	2	3	2
3A	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	1

a combination of a current assignment and the number of working modules in each string, and a current assignment specifies a current for each string. The output of our algorithm is feasibility of the given configuration. That is, the algorithm determines whether there exists assignment of panels to strings that realizes the configuration.

B. Panel Selection Strategy

Let s be the number of strings, and i_h ($0 \leq h < s$) be the current assigned to the h -th string. Without loss of generality, we assume $i_0 \leq i_1 \leq \dots \leq i_{s-1}$ holds. In our algorithm, we first determine the assignment of panels for the $(s-1)$ -th string (i.e., the string with the biggest current), and then determine assignments for $(s-2)$ -th string, $(s-3)$ -th string, and so on.

We explain the way to determine the assignment of the $(s-1)$ -th string. To do this, we consider the number of working modules of each panel for currents less than i_{s-1} . Let $m_p(i)$ be the number of working modules of Panel p that work in current i . For each panel p , we consider the difference vector $D_p = (m_p(i_{s-2}) - m_p(i_{s-1}), m_p(i_{s-3}) - m_p(i_{s-2}), \dots, m_p(i_0) - m_p(i_1))$. The first element d_1 of D_p means, if we use panel p in current i_{s-1} , we lose d_1 working modules in current i_{s-2} Sorry, I didn't complete this comment.

In order to give more precise reconfiguration strategy. Our proposed algorithm firstly sort panels in a particular order for MPP candidates. For the example of fourth MPP candidate $\{2, 2, 3\}$, by giving dataset in Table I generate a selection matrix in (II) that each column indicate panel's number and each row indicate to string number. Element in the matrix corresponding to number of module which be able to working on string current.

Then calculate number of module difference among string currents. For panel 1, difference between string 3 and string 2 is 1 ($Diff_1 = 1$) and difference between string 2 and string 1 is 0 ($Diff_2 = 0$). Sort panels in lexicographic order by

$Diff_1$ and $Diff_2$. As showed in matrix (3).

	P2	P3	P1	P5	P7	P9	P4	P6	P8
St1	2	0	1	1	2	2	2	2	3
St2	2	0	1	1	2	2	2	2	3
St3	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
$Diff_1$	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	2	3
$Diff_2$	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

(3)

To find the best PV configuration, following steps are required:

- 1- Select panels in matrix (3) from left side to right.
- 2- If the element in matrix is 0, release corresponding panel
- 3- Replace selected panels if summations of selected panels' contain modules are equal to unselect panel. As the example of string 2, selected panels are [Panel 1, Panel 5], these panels contain modules are equal to next unselect panel [Panel 4]. Then swap [Panel 1, Panel 5] and [Panel 4], release [Panel 1, Panel 5].
- 4- If replacement approved, step 3 will be repeated till summations of selected panel contain modules are large or equal to Q_{M_n} .
- 5- Otherwise, none of the replacement will be approved. Evaluate selected panels with feasibility requirement and compare selected modules with the requirement of Q_{M_n} .
- 6- If there remain any unselect panel, set unselect panel to a string with minimum length.

C. Panel Replace Strategy

In the section IV-B, to obtain optimal panel selection need swap undesired panel. Based on section II, each panel only contain three identical PV modules. So the element in selection matrix in the range of 0 to 3. The replacement policy follows priorities are:

- (1) Swap a panel contain 3 working modules to **three** panels each contain 1 working module.
- (2) Swap a panel contain 3 working modules to **one** panel contain 1 working module and **one** contain 2 working modules.
- (3) Swap a panel contain 2 working modules to **two** panels each contain 1 working module.

By inspecting the features of each module in Table I, there are no configuration for MPP candidate 1 and MPP candidate 2. Configuration for MPP candidate 3 is that first string include Panel 1, Panel 2 and Panel 4; the second string include Panel 5, Panel 6 and Panel 7; the third string include Panel 3, Panel 8 and Panel 9. Configuration for MPP candidate 4 is that first string include Panel 1, Panel 5 and Panel 8; the second string include Panel 3, Panel 4 and Panel 6; the third string include Panel 2, Panel 7 and Panel 9. Optimal configuration for this partial-shading PV array as showed in Fig. 4.

V. EVALUATION OF OPTIMIZATION ALGORITHM

Although the pilot example refers to three strings only, the extension of the method to any number of parallel connected strings is the same. This section verifies the effectiveness of proposed algorithm using Matlab simulation. With pilot

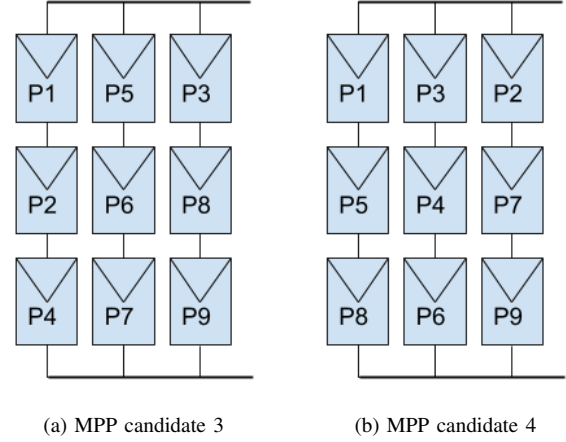


Fig. 4: Configuration of partial-shading PV array

example presented in last section, shading scenario as showed in Fig.5a. To minimize power loss, the proposed algorithm, as described, is applied to reconfigure the system. The resulting configuration is depicted in Fig.5b and Fig.5c.

As shown, working module on each string are large or equal than required Q_{M_n} , which means mismatched power loss are minimized. The P - V curve for this PV array before and after reconfiguration are showed in Fig.6. It can be seen that after reconfiguration maximum power (!!!!!! W and !!!!!W) are significantly higher than before reconfiguration maximum power (!!!!!!W).

To evaluate the performance of proposed algorithm, we compare the propose algorithm with exhaustive search algorithm for 300 different partial-shading PV arrays. For each PV array, contain 2~15 PV panels connected into 2~5 strings. The PV panels will have contain 2~20 different current candidates.

The computational time required to find the best configuration and accuracy of configuration in the proposed and exhaustive search algorithm are compared and summarized in Table III. As shown in Table III, proposed algorithm achieved high accuracy and less computing time compare with exhaustive search algorithm and methods described in [10].

TABLE III

COMPARISON BETWEEN EXISTED METHODS AND PROPOSED ALGORITHM

	Propose Algorithm	Exhaustive search Algorithm
Number of PV Array	300	
Number of MPP candidates	10961	
Feasible Candidates	1180	1278
Unfeasible Candidates	9781	9683
Error Rate	0.89%	0%
Ave. times per Array	0.157s	4370s

The calculation time used by the proposed algorithm for one MPP candidate was 157 ms, which is significantly lower com-

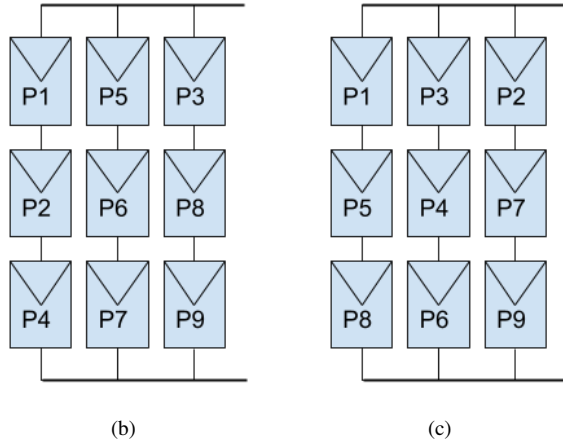
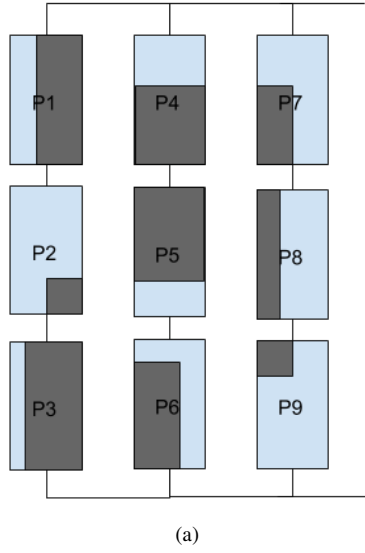


Fig. 5: The PV system under shading scenario (a) before reconfiguration, (b) after reconfiguration for MPP candidate $\{2, 2, 2\}$ and (c) MPP candidate $\{2, 2, 3\}$

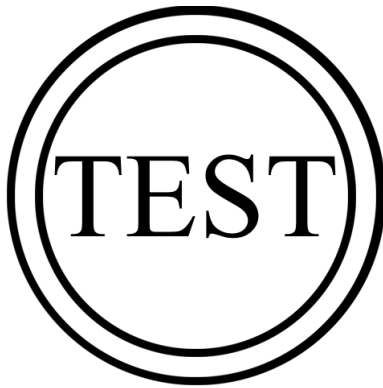


Fig. 6: The P - V curves for the PV system under first shading scenario before and after reconfiguration.

pared with exhaustive search 1hour 12min 50s and accuracy are higher than methods proposed in [10] [12].

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The existing PV reconfiguration methods either have high accuracy but suffer from long computational time such as exhausted searching algorithm or GA, or they have short computational time but do not guarantee the best configuration as described in [10] [11] [12]. This paper proposed a new PV system reconfiguration algorithm with feasibility check function and have high accuracy and less computational time. Proposed algorithm's effectiveness has been validated using Matlab simulation. The algorithm was tested though un-uniform shadow distribution among PV array and shows its effectiveness in finding optimal configuration. The proposed algorithm also compared with existed method in terms of accuracy and computational time. The result shows that proposed algorithm has high accuracy and less computational time.

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