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The Power Configurations of the Central Civilization/ World System in the 11th Century

David Wilkinson

This paper is one in a series in which the political careers of civilizations receive snapshot codings of their overall power structures at feasible intervals. The comparative-civilizational concept herein employed views civilizations as societies with cities, constituting networks whose nodes are the cities and whose links are the avenues of movement between cities.

Cities are interlinked in networks cultural, political and economic. The boundaries of these networks are not the same. This paper examines one civilizational network in its political aspect. Politics is understood as per Hans Morgenthau (1978): a struggle for power and peace, the struggle being unending, the power (if any) and the peace (if any) being transitory. Civilizations in their political aspect are seen not just as networks of “states,” of “powers,” which fight and negotiate, ally and betray, unite and fracture, conquer and submit, appear and vanish: i.e. practice “power politics” (Wight 1964).

Such networks of powers may be labeled “state systems” (Melko 1969, Wesson 1978), “systems of states” (Wight 1977), or “international systems” (Hoffmann 1961; Rosecrance 1963). Whatever the label, they have recognizable structure or distribution of power, with variety in form. Such form is called “power polarity,” or simply “polarity.” This paper treats “polarity” as a qualitative variable with seven available “values,” all well-established terms in political science. These values reflect the number and type of “centers of power” in the system, or, in a long-established term, its “Great Powers” (Black, 2008; Mearsheimer, 2014; Ranke, 1950 [1833]). At one extreme of this power spectrum, a states-system with no Great Powers embodies “nonpolarity” (Haass, 2008). At the other end, a system whose power structure has been unified (as say in Qin Shi Huang Ti’s “unification of China”) has several labels—“universal monarchy” (Fichte, 2013 [1807]), “universal state” (Toynbee, 1934-1961), “universal empire” (Quigley, 1961), “imperial system” (Melko, 1969), “imperial order” (Wesson, 1967); for our purposes, the simple term “empire” will suffice, understood as indicating a systemwide political unity. The other five values of the polarity variable lie between these extremes: “multipolarity” (Aron, 1966; Kegley and Raymond, 1994); “tripolarity” (Lam, 2011; Schweller, 1993); “bipolarity” (Kaplan, 1957; Waltz, 1964); “unipolarity” (Hansen, 2012; Jervis, 2009; Kapstein and Mastanduno, 1999); “hegemony” (Black, 2008; Posen, 2003; Watson 2007).
The current undertaking is a sequencing of power-polarity structures in search of patterns of stability and change in such power structures. This paper is the 16th of a series in which the political careers of civilizational power structures receive snapshot codings of their overall power structures at feasible intervals. The narratives are produced by collating histories with large frames of reference. Previous articles in the series have examined the Indic system 550 BC-AD 1800, the Far Eastern 1025 BC – AD 1850, the Southwest Asian c. 2700 – 1500 BC, the Northeast African c. 2625-1500 BC (Wilkinson, 2006, 1999, 2001, 2004b), and contended that the Northeast African and Southwest Asian systems and sequences merged c. 1500 BC to form the “Central” system, which persisted. A previous article has coded this system from 1500 BC to 700 BC (Wilkinson, 2004a), and previous papers have examined the system from AD 1100 to date. In the current paper, the Central system’s power structure is coded at 10-year intervals 1000-1100.

What were the boundaries of the Central system in the 11th century? It will readily be seen when we construct a narrative of politico-military transactions that in the 11th century all of “Europe” --the northern fringe (Norway, Sweden, the Baltic lands), Central Europe, Italy, Eastern Europe with the Slavic lands, the Balkans—is part of the same system. So are North Africa and Egypt, Anatolia and Syria, the Caucasus, Mesopotamia, northern Arabia, Iran, and even western Central Asia east of the Caspian Sea (spoken of here as the “East End” of the Central system during the period under study). Culturally, these areas may be seen as the Western, Orthodox and Islamic “culture-civilizations”; politically, they are bound together in a single network of politico-military transactions, whose structure must needs be seen as a whole.

The power configurations of the Central system were coded at 10-year intervals from AD 1000 to 1100. Sixteen Cambridge Histories were consulted to elicit the 11th century power structure; both editions of the Medieval History, both editions of the History of Islam, and the separate histories of early Inner Asia, the Byzantine Empire, Iran, Poland and Russia. It is the norm in such histories for entities such as the Kara-Khanid Khanate or Hungary to be accorded particular attention in the period of their rise to, tenure of, and fall from great power status: thus Golden (1990) writes of Kara-Khanid “conquests,” expansion, “power,” border agreements, interdynastic marriages, and intra-Kara-Khanid wars, while Nora Berend (2004) tells the story of how Hungary moved from a nomad steppe tribal confederation to a “united and powerful kingdom.” These normal-historical power-narratives centered on one great power consolidating expanding, retrenching, allying, defending, intervening, dominating, being subjugated, fragmenting, or one region were then drawn on to synthesize a power-narrative for the entire system.
Figure 1
The Field of Action of the Central System in AD 1000 and AD 1100.
(T.A. Lessman; not to scale)

Note: the (small) numbered countries in the AD 1000 and AD 1100 maps are named on Lessman’s source maps at http://www.worldhistorymaps.info/images/East-Hem_1000ad.jpg and http://www.worldhistorymaps.info/images/East-Hem_1100ad.jpg

Accordingly, the general procedure adopted in this section is to provide a decade by decade historical recapitulation of the power politics of the Central world system. This narrative is used to derive a coding for the system's power structure at intervals of a decade. To replicate the process, a researcher could go to the same set of historical sources, and independently recode them; or seek out an alternative set of histories, to check for possible biases in the Cambridge Histories exclusively relied upon herein.
The sensitive observer may feel that the following narrative is narrowly focused on wars, rebellions and civil wars, imperial collapses, state failures, dynastic ambitions and extinctions, territories claimed and invaded, gained and lost. The sensitive observer will be correct. The narrative focuses on those events by which power, and rank among the powers of the world, was gained and lost: for power is our topic.

**Great Powers of AD 1000**

As of AD 1000, from east to west in the Central system, the great powers were the Kara-Khanid Khanate (Transoxania), the Ghaznavid Emirate (Afghanistan), the Buyid Emirate (Iran-Iraq), Cumania (Caspian steppe), Patzinakia (Pontic steppe), Kievan Rus’, the Fatimid Caliphate (Tunis, Sicily, Egypt), the Byzantine (‘‘Roman’’) Empire in Anatolia and the southern Balkans, the (First) Bulgarian Empire, Hungary (in the Carpathian Basin), the German (Holy Roman) Empire in Germany and northern Italy, and the Ummayad Caliphate in Iberia.

Most 11th century great powers had formed when once semi-nomadic dynasties conquered great cities and formed settled states. The Turkic Confederation known as Kara-Khanids, led by Kara-khan Ali b. Musa, had conquered Transoxania from the Samanids in 999, and with it its chief city Samarkand (~75,000 population), and in AD 1000 had lately seized Bukhara (75,000: all population figures hereafter cited are from Chandler, 1987).

The Ghaznavids of Afghanistan under the redoubtable Mahmud of Ghazni (r. 998-1030) had conquered Khorasan and Afghanistan from the Samanids in 999. Ruling from Ghazni (60,000), their largest city was Nishapur (125,000).

The Buyids, a Shia Iranian Muslim dynasty, controlled Iran and Iraq at their peak in the late 10th century, with footholds in Syria, Oman and even Yemen, but the Buyid Emirate shrank at the margins under Baha ‘al-Dawla (r. 988-1012). Still, in AD 1000, the Buyids’ cities included Isfahan (100,000) and Rayy (100,000), and they had effective control of the still larger, nominally Abbasid, metropolis of Baghdad.

A different type of power, uncitified but aspiring to follow in the footsteps (or hoofprints) of their once semi-nomadic precursors, was represented by Cumania, the Cuman-Kipchak Turkic-multiethnic confederation of khanates, grazing its horses and cattle on the plains east of the Pontic steppe of the Black Sea and west of Transoxania. Cumania lacked any strong central commanding power but nevertheless mustered substantial military forces and assailed their neighbors as opportunity offered, and thus qualifies as a great power of AD 1000.
A similar currently semi-nomadic power was that of Patzinakia, the Khanates of the Pechenegs. These began the 11th century as occupants of the Pontic steppe north of the Black Sea, periodically in alliance with or at war against their neighbors, Kievan Rus’ to the north, Cumania to the east, Khazaria to the southeast, and Magyars of Hungary to the west.

Grand Prince Vladimir Sviatoslavich the Great of Kievan Rus’ (r. 980-1015) had converted to Orthodox Christianity and brought his subject people with him; he ruled from the Baltic to Ukraine. His capital was Kiev (45,000).

The 11th century began auspiciously for the Byzantine Empire. Basil II of the Macedonian Dynasty (r. 976-1025) had by AD 1000 stabilized his control of the Empire, ruling from Constantinople (300,000).

The First Bulgarian Empire, ruled from Ochrida (40,000) by Tsar Samuel (r. 997-1014), stretched from the Black Sea to the Adriatic. Samuel enthroned an ally in Croatia AD 1000.

In 1000, the Fatimid Caliphate, an Ismaili Shi’ite Arab dynasty, ruled Egypt, eastern North Africa, Sicily, Palestine and the Hejaz, with a strong emphasis upon trade, art and scholarship, while holding the territories acquired in the Caliphate’s 10th century expansion with polyethnic armies of Berbers, Turks, Sudanese and others. Its capital was Cairo (135,000).

Prince Stephen I (r. 997-1038) became the first king of Hungary in AD 1000, with the approval of the Holy Roman Emperor and the Pope. Stephen ruled from Hungary’s first capital city, Esztergom (c. 15,000). Hungary was friendly with Germany and Byzantium, rivalrous with Poland and Patzinakia.

The Ummayad Caliphate of Cordoba (450,000) was in AD 1000 under the hajib (sc. vizier) Almanzor (d. 1002). As of AD 1000, Almanzor’s successful campaigns against the Christian Iberian realms of Galicia, Leon, Castile, and Barcelona had prompted them to ally against Cordoba.

These great powers were institutionally quite diverse, even as the great powers and superpowers of today are institutionally diverse. As noted, Kara-Khanids, Ghaznavids, Buyids, Fatimids, Bulgars, Hungarians and Ummayads had once been semi-nomadic barbarian war-bands, but, having conquered urban centers (Samarkand, Nishapur, Baghdad, Cairo, Ochrida, Solva/Esztergom, and Cordova respectively), had followed the pattern of civic assimilation noted by Ibn Khaldun (1958 [c. 1377]). The Rus’ war-bands had founded cities of their own, Kiev having been declared their metropolis or “Mother of cities” (mat’ gorodov russkikh).
Cumans and Pechenegs were still in the war-band stage, but had aspirations, directed toward Constantinople. The Byzantine Empire was uniquely organized and bureaucratized. The Holy Roman Empire was differently unique, drawing from about twenty small cities in its two component kingdoms of Germany and Italy.

Culturally the powers were also as diverse as are contemporary powers. Western and Eastern Christianity, Sunni and Shi’ite Islam, and indeed shamanism and Tengrism, all were represented among the great powers of AD 1000.

But however heterogeneous the polyculture of the Central system, its states all spoke the *lingua franca* of power politics. What these entities have in common, and what makes them comparable on that dimension, is their command of force and their control of territories and peoples from whom they drew what force they required at any given moment.

Some of the Great Powers of AD 1000 would not last the century as states (Buyids, Ummayads). Other proved far more durable (the Byzantine and Holy Roman Empires). Hungary exists today, as a state though not as a Great Power. Perhaps it behooves Americans, with a state history of not quite two and a half centuries, to take due notice of entities now-vanished but of similar duration such as the Ghaznavid Empire, the Fatimid Caliphate or the Kara-Khanid Khanate.

That said, we begin the 11th century with a “multipolar” coding, and with the following roster of great powers:

**AD 1000: Multipolar. Great Powers: Kara-Khanid Khanate, Ghaznavid Emirate, Buyid Emirate, Fatimid Caliphate, Cumania, Patzinakia, Kievan Rus’, Byzantine Empire, First Bulgarian Empire, Hungary, German (Holy Roman) Empire, Ummayad Caliphate.**

**A Power Narrative of the 11th Century Central System**

The Kara-Khanid domain was parcelled out into appendages for the sons of Kara-khan Ali b. Musa. In alliance, Ali’s sons sought to conquer Khorasan from Ghazni but were defeated in 1008. The Kara-Khanids fell into internecine strife, this alternating with hostilities with Ghazni.

The Ghaznavids of Afghanistan disputed with the Kara-Khanids at the Oxus. On near-annual raids (1001-1024) Mahmud penetrated the Indian subcontinent to exact submission and tribute, or, if denied, to loot and destroy Hindu temples.

The Buyid Emirate shrank at the margins under Baha’ al-Dawla (r. 988-1012).
Grand Prince Vladimir Sviatoslavich the Great (r. 980-1015) of Kievan Rus’ allied with Byzantium, maintained peace with Poland and Hungary, and sought with the help of his many wives and concubines to become a true father to his country. He made his sons princes of Novgorod, Pilots, Rostov, Tmutarakan, Smolensk, Drevlya, Turov, and Volhynia, thereby setting the stage for the later dissolution of his realm.

In AD 1000 the Byzantine Empire made a truce with the Fatimid Caliphate of Egypt, a truce which in fact outlasted its intended ten-year term despite strains over Fatimid treatment of Christians. From 1000 to 1018 Basil campaigned against Tsar Samuel of Bulgaria, while the Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim (r. 996-1021) conducted Ismaili proselytization against the declining local power of the Qarmatian Republic of Bahrain, and he fought a war of words with the theologically prestigious Sunni Abbasid Caliph of Baghdad al-Qadir (r. 991-1031), who was under Buyid domination as regarded secular power.

Tsar Samuel of the First Bulgarian Empire faced a long war of attrition via annual and devastating invasions by the Byzantine Empire under Basil II from 1001.

The rulers of the 11th century Holy Roman Empire faced challenges to their inclinations toward central power and imperial expansion from independence-minded dukes and cities: Dukes of Poland; cities of Rome; and, eventually, Roman Catholic Popes. Otto III (r. 996-1002) of the Saxon line had installed his tutor, the scholar Gerbert, as Pope Sylvester II (r. 999-1003). Otto was recognized as overlord by the Dukes of Poland and Bohemia, and as a friend by the King of Hungary and the Doge of Venice, but had not fully re-established control over riotous Rome when he died young, without issue and without an obvious successor.

During the interregnum that followed Otto’s death, Italy broke away under its own King, Arduin of Ivrea (r. 1002-1004), while Germany chose Henry II of the Saxon line. Henry led three expeditions into Italy, the first in 1004 to overthrow Arduin and seize the kingship of Italy). Henry fought the Polish ruler Bolesław I the Brave over Lusatia, Upper Lusatia, Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia in a series of wars 1002-1018.

The Ummayad Caliphate fell into civil war (Fitna al-Andalus) from 1009 to 1031 as a consequence of succession-murders in the hereditary vizierate and succession-coups in the caliphal lineage. From 1009 to 1031 there briefly reigned the 3rd through 11th Caliphs, four being each once overthrown and restored.

The Buyid Emirate persisted in name, but in fractured form, after the death of Baha ‘al-Dawla (1012).

The disputed succession to Grand Prince Vladimir Sviatoslavich the Great of Kievan Russia invited Polish and Pecheneg intervention (1015-1019); with the help of the Pechenegs, Yaroslav I the Wise succeeded (r. 1019-1054).

In 1016 Basil II of Byzantium overcame the Crimean Khazar warlord George Tzul, and later recovered the southern Crimea. In 1014, at the battle of Kleidion, Basil destroyed the Bulgarian army. By 1018-1019 the Bulgarian governors and nobles had surrendered to Basil, whose conquest of Bulgaria brought Byzantine power to the Danubian frontier.

Duke Bolesław I of Poland built Polish independence by setting up an independent church structure, denying tribute, and fighting Emperor Henry II for control of Lusatia, Upper Lusatia, Moravia and Slovakia, which Bolesław obtained at the Peace of Bautzen (1018), and for Bohemia, which Bolesław did not acquire. Having secured his western frontier for the time being, Bolesław turned east, conquered Red Ruthenia, and briefly (1018-1019) reinstated his son-in-law Sviatopolk I the Accursed as Grand Prince of Kiev.

Holy Roman Emperor Henry II led a second invasion of Italy in 1014 to reseat Pope Benedict VIII, who had been expelled by a Roman noble. Benedict (r. 1012-1024) became concerned about Byzantine reincursions into southern Italy, and persuaded Holy Roman Emperor Henry II to balance against the Greeks.

Sweyn Forkbeard, King of Denmark, conquered England in 1013 and died in 1014; Ethelred the Unready (r. 978-1013, 1014-1016) returned, to face rebellion from his son Edmund Ironside and invasion from Sweyn’s son Cnut the Great. Ethelred died in 1016, and Edmund and Cnut contended for power; Cnut was victorious in 1016. Cnut ruled the “North Sea Empire” of Denmark, England, Norway, and the southern tip of Sweden until his death in 1035. He allied with Poland and Normandy and subjected Scotland and the king of the Irish Sea. The North Sea Empire was in its brief term a great power.


Mahmud of Ghazni at the peak of his power c. 1027 established a brief rule over territories from today’s Iran (Rayy fell to the Ghaznavids in 1029, taken from the Buyids) to the Punjab. The Seljuk Turks began to nibble at Mahmud’s domains from 1027.
Mstislav, Prince of Tmutarakan and of Chernigov, and brother of Grand Prince Yaroslav the Wise, was able to force a temporary partition of the Kievan realm 1024-c. 1035.

Croatia submitted to Byzantium as a vassal state, Armenian Vaspurakan was annexed (1021), Georgia truncated (1022). Basil II left a stable, powerful and prosperous empire to his successors, the inept Constantine VIII (r. 1025-1028) and the unlucky Romanus III Argyros (r. 1028-1034).

Holy Roman Emperor Henry II led a third invasion of Italy in 1022. He had limited success in restoring imperial control over a chaos in southern Italy. Henry faced rebellions from the German Dukes of Swabia, Bavaria and Saxony at various times. He died in 1024 without issue. The German dukes next elected Conrad II, first of the Salian Dynasty (r. 1024-1039, imp. 1027). Conrad toured the German duchies to assuage local opposition to his election. The Italian nobles again saw an opportunity to establish an independent kingdom, and Conrad invaded Italy in 1026-1027 to overawe and subjugate them. Conrad worked to secure closer personal control of the duchies of Bavaria, Swabia and Carinthia, where he was able to install close relatives as dukes.

Upon the death in 1025 of Bolesław I the Brave of Poland, who had in his last two months of life ruled as King of Poland, his son Mieszko Lambert ruled as King (1025-1031). Mieszko assisted German nobles rebelling against German King and (later) Roman Emperor Conrad II. Conrad retaliated by organizing a coalition against Mieszko, cooperating with Lusatian rebels, concluding predatory alliances with Duke Oldřich of Bohemia (who reacquired Moravia) and Grand Prince Yaroslav I of Kiev (who recovered Red Ruthenia), and neutralizing Poland’s ally Stephen I of Hungary by territorial concessions.

AD 1030: Multipolar. Great Powers: Kara-Khanid Khanate, Ghaznavid Emirate, Fatimid Caliphate, Cumania, Patzinakia, Volga Bulgaria, Kievan Rus’, Byzantine Empire, Hungary, Poland, German (Holy Roman) Empire, North Sea Empire.

The Seljuk Turks continued their incursions against the Ghaznavids after the death of Mahmud of Ghazni in1030. Under Sultan Tugril Beg (r. 1037-1063), this Turkic steppe confederacy took (1037-1040) Khorasan, the former Ghaznavid west, from the Ghaznavids.

Yaroslav I the Wise reunited the Rus’ at Mstislav’s death in 1035. Yaroslav allied with Sweden in marriage and war, alternately fought and allied with Poland and Byzantium, and drove the Pechenegs out of the Pontic steppe in 1036. Thereafter, the Pechenegs moved west and crossed the Danube, being replaced in the Pontic steppe by the Cuman power.
Byzantine Emperor Michael IV the Paphlagonian (r. 1034-1041) faced pressure from Arabs, Pechenegs, rebelling Bulgarians and Serbs, Lombard allies and Norman mercenaries; he regained Sicily, and lost it again.

King Stephen I of Hungary held off an invasion by Holy Roman Emperor Conrad II in 1030. After Stephen’s death in 1038, there were civil and foreign wars and German and Polish interventions.

After his defeat at the hands of Emperor Conrad II, King Mieszko of Poland fled to Bohemia and was briefly replaced by his half-brother Bezprym (r. 1031-1032), who repudiated regal status and held the ducal title. After Bezprym’s assassination Mieszko was restored and ruled again as King (1032-1034). At Mieszko’s death, his nominal successor was Casimir I the Restorer.

After two campaigns (1033-1034), Holy Roman Emperor Conrad II acquired the Kingdom of Burgundy. Conrad managed to secure the succession to his son, Henry III the Pious (r. 1039-1056, imp. 1046).

Norman mercenaries had entered service in southern Italy from 999. They began to establish their own statelets from 1030 at the expense of Lombard dukes and princes and of the Byzantine Empire. Slow progress was made by separate Norman forces in southern Italy and Sicily against Lombards, Byzantines and Muslims.

In France, Henry I (r. 1031-1060) was even weaker than his father Robert with respect to his feudal “vassals.”

The North Sea Empire of Cnut the Great was personal, and broke apart upon his death. England fell to Harold I Harefoot (r. 1035-1040).

By 1031, the Caliphate of Cordoba had broken up into more than thirty “taifas,” mostly ruled as emirates. The Abbadid taifa of Seville was expansive, conquering eleven other taifas by 1078. The collapse of the powerful Caliphate offered the Christian states of northern Iberia—León, Castile, Navarre, Aragon and the Catalanian counties—the opportunity to expand against its weaker and fractious successors. Ferdinand I united León and Castile 1037-1065, and made full use of his ensuing power advantage.


About 1041-1042, Kara-Khanid rivalries led to the division of the Khanate into Western and Eastern Khanates, which fought over Fergana.
Under Sultan Tugril Beg, the Seljuk Turks took the Iranian plateau (1040-1044). The Buyids lost Kerman to the Seljuks in 1048.

The Fatimids lost Tunis to local rebels in 1048.

Peter Orseolo of Hungary (r. 1038-1041 and 1044-1046) was restored, after his first deposition in favor of Samuel Aba (1041-1044), by Holy Roman Emperor Henry III, despite Peter earlier having invaded the Empire, as had Samuel.

Casimir I the Restorer of Poland (r. 1042-1058), aided by German Emperor Henry III, regained actual power in Poland in the face of pagan rebellion, noble secession and Bohemian invasions.

Holy Roman Emperor Henry III managed with difficulty to subjugate the rebellious duchy of Bohemia (1040) and forced Samuel Aba of Hungary to surrender some border territories (1042-1043), next reinstalling the expelled Peter Orseolo as vassal king of Hungary (1044). Henry deposed three quarreling would-be popes and appointed Clement II in 1046, partially asserting imperial authority in southern Italy in 1047. He next reasserted authority in his lowland northwest, and appointed two popes in quick succession.

On the death of Harold I Harefoot his brother Harthacnut, king of Denmark, briefly ruled England (1040-1042). Edward the Confessor, son of Ethelred the Unready, succeeded, and ruled 1042-1066, preoccupied with internal power struggles and border affrays with Scotland and Wales.


In the long rule of Ibrahim of Ghazni (r. 1059-1099), the Ghaznavids became basically a part of the Indic system.

Seljuk Turk Sultan Tugril Beg attacked Byzantine Anatolia (1054). The last Buyid Emir of Iraq (1048-1055) was displaced by the Seljuk Sultan, who took Baghdad and Iraq from the Buyids and subjugated the Abbasid Caliphate of Baghdad (1055-1060). The Abbasid Caliphate persisted in name but without secular power.
Upon the death of Grand Prince Yaroslav I the Wise, Kievan Rus’ was divided among his three surviving sons, Iziaslav I of Kiev (who sought support from Poland, Germany and the Papacy), Sviatoslav II of Chernigov, and Vsevolod I of Pereyaslavl, who ruled as a triumvirate under the primacy of Iziaslav (1054-1073). Vsevolod I made peace with the Cumans c. 1055.

The Hungarians having overthrown his vassal Peter Orseolo and installed King Andrew, the Holy Roman Emperor Henry III invaded Hungary twice (1051, 1052) without success.

Casimir I of Poland spent his reign stabilizing his holdings, was appeased by Henry III with Bohemian territory (1054), and was succeeded in 1058 by Bolesław II the Bold.

Holy Roman Emperor Henry III’s appointed pope Leo IX (r. 1049-1054), urged by the Byzantine Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos, unsuccessfully fought the Normans in southern Italy (battle of Civitate, 1053), revealing the weakness there of both the German and Byzantine Emperors.

Pope Leo IX wrote to Michael Cerularius, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, asserting the universal secular and religious imperium of the Pope, a position unacceptable to Byzantine Patriarch and Emperor alike. Excommunications were exchanged, and the Papal-Byzantine alliance broken, in the first act of the Great East-West Schism.

Pope Nicholas II (r. 1059-1061) ousted the Antipope-to-be Benedict X with Norman help, and accordingly allied with the Normans and claimed the right of the Cardinals to elect the Pope, as against the rights of previous contestants, the Italian aristocrats and the German Emperors. Meanwhile the Norman Robert Guiscard (c. 1015-1085) became, at first in name by papal favor and later in fact by his own doing, Duke of Apulia and Calabria.

Ferdinand I of Leon & Castile subjugated the rival Christian Kingdom of Navarre (1054), and took territory from it. He began the conquest of Badajoz (1057-1062).

**AD 1060: Multipolar. Great Powers: Eastern Kara-Khanid Khanate, Western Kara-Khanid Khanate, Seljuk Sultanate, Fatimid Caliphate, Cumania, Patzinakia, Volga Bulgaria, Byzantine Empire, Poland, German (Holy Roman) Empire, León & Castile.**

Seljuk Sultan Tugrul Beg took Fars in 1062, ending the Buyid dynasty. Sultan Alp Arslan (r. 1063-1072) conquered Armenia and Georgia in 1064 and fought the Fatimids in Syria from 1068.

Civil war in Fatimid Egypt in the 1060s permanently weakened the Fatimid dynasty.
A Cuman-Rus’ 172-year war began in 1061. The Cumans defeated the Rus’ triumvirate’s army in 1068 and were then defeated by Sviatoslav II of Chernigov alone.

Byzantine Emperor Constantine X Doukas (r. 1059-1067) weakened the Byzantine military and lost most of southern Italy to the Normans, Caesarea in Cappadocia to the Seljuk Turks, Balkan territory to the Oghuz Turks, and Belgrade to Hungary. Romanus II Diogenes (r. 1068-1071) attempted to recover territory lost to the Seljuks.

Andrew of Hungary preferred his son Solomon (r. 1063-1074) to his brother Béla I (r. 1060-1063); in 1060, Béla’s Polish backers defeated Andrew’s German backers, but Solomon’s German backers installed him after Béla’s death. There was a period of cooperation between Solomon and Andrew’s sons (1064-1071) during which Hungary briefly seized Belgrade from Byzantium.

Holy Roman Emperor Henry III, having died young in 1056 amidst no more than the normal number of rebellions, left a sea of troubles to his son, Henry IV. Henry IV (b. 1050, r. 1053-1105, imp. 1084) suffered the consequences of being an infant-“king.”

Bolesław II the Bold of Poland opposed the German (Holy Roman) Emperor Henry IV (or rather his handlers) and his Bohemian allies. Bolesław installed (1061) Béla I as King of Hungary but failed to prevent his succession (1063) by Solomon. Bolesław reinstated (1069) Iziaslav I as Grand Prince of Kiev.

Pope Alexander II (r. 1061-1073), elected in the new manner without reference to the German Emperor, successfully defended his claim to the Papal See against the forces of the German candidate, Antipope-to-be Honorius II. Alexander in his newly independent status called for a crusade against the Moors in Spain and blessed the Norman conquest of Anglo-Saxon England.

Robert Guiscard and his brother Roger I Bosso began the Norman conquest of Sicily in 1061.

Philip I of France (1060-1108) was, like his predecessors, preoccupied with vassal revolts, though he did add somewhat to the royal demesne.

Edward the Confessor of England was briefly succeeded (1066) by Harold Godwinson, who was destroyed by the Norman Duke William the Conqueror (r. 1066-1087). King William I spent some years consolidating his hold on England, and managing his fractious sons.
Ferdinand I of León & Castile continued his expansionist career, taking territory from Zaragoza (1060) and Badajoz (1057-1062), extracting tribute (parias) from Zaragoza (1060), Toledo (1062) and Valencia (1065), and raiding Seville and Badajoz (1063). But Ferdinand partitioned his kingdoms and vassalries among his children at his death in 1065, and his successors fought one another.

**AD 1070: Multipolar: Eastern Kara-Khanid Khanate, Western Kara-Khanid Khanate, Seljuk Sultanate, Cumania, Patzinakia, Volga Bulgaria, Byzantine Empire, Hungary, Poland, German (Holy Roman) Empire.**

Seljuk Sultan Alp Arslan defeated and captured Byzantine Emperor Romanus IV Diogenes at Manzikert in 1071, provoking Byzantine civil strife. Sultan Malik-Shah I (r. 1072-1092) and his domineering vizier Nizam al-Mulk subjugated the Western Kara-Khanids in campaigns from c. 1072 to 1090.

In Kievan Rus’, Sviatoslav of Chernigov in his last years (1073-1077) temporarily displaced Iziaslav of Kiev. Vsevolod of Pereyaslavl succeeded (r. 1078-1093).

Hungary fell into civil war, Solomon again receiving German support. Solomon was overthrown by Czech forces in favor of Andrew’s son Géza I (1074-1077). An invasion by German Emperor Henry IV failed to reinstate Solomon, who was however able to preserve his power in two fortresses and to continue his struggle during the rule of Géza’s brother Ladislaus I (r. 1077–1095).

Bolesław II of Poland had a lively decade. He received the royal title (1076) from Pope Gregory VII the Great in return for his opposition to Emperor Henry IV in the Investiture Controversy; he installed (1077) Ladislaus I as King of Hungary; he again reinstalled (1077) Iziaslav I in Kiev; he reconquered (1078) Red Ruthenia; and at last he was deposed and exiled by his barons (1079). He was replaced by his brother Władysław I Herman (r. 1079-1102).

Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV quelled a Saxon rebellion (1073-1075), and defeated the Great Saxon Revolt of 1077-1080. Henry fell into the Investiture Controversy with the extreme papal-supremacist Gregory VII (r. 1073-1085). Gregory, with Norman backing, conducted a power struggle with Henry IV, excommunicating him on three occasions (1076, 1080, and 1084). By 1080, Anglo-Normandy may be seen as a great power. It had certainly attracted the attention of papal diplomats, who sought (but did not get) its fealty, and of the King of France, who sought to weaken it by promoting the rebellion of William’s son Robert.

Alfonso VI the Brave (r. 1072-1109) reunited the kingdoms of León & Castile.
The Almoravid leader Yusuf ibn Tashfin (r. 1072-1106) succeeded to the Almoravid command in northern Morocco from 1072 under the banner of Islamic Puritanism.

**AD 1080: Multipolar. Great Powers: Eastern Kara-Khanid Khanate, Western Kara-Khanid Khanate, Seljuk Sultanate, Cumania, Patzinakia, Volga Bulgaria, Byzantine Empire, German (Holy Roman) Empire, Anglo-Normandy, León and Castile, Almoravids.**

The Eastern Kara-Khanids were briefly and nominally subjugated by the Seljuks in 1089-1090, but in fact continued to act independently.

Byzantine civil strife allowed the 1080s conquest and Turkification of much of Byzantine Anatolia when Seljuk Sultan Malik-Shah I (r. 1072-1092) authorized his generals to carve out 6 vassal “atabeyliks” in northeastern, eastern, central and western Anatolia. In 1087, the same Byzantine civil strife tempted the Pechenegs to invade the Balkan territories of the Empire.

Solomon of Hungary persevered in his struggle for power, joining with Cumans and Pechenegs against Ladislaus (1085) and then against Byzantium, until he died fighting the Byzantines (1087). Thereafter Ladislaus stabilized Hungary.

Władysław I Herman of Poland appeased the Empire and Bohemia, and abandoned the struggle to control Hungary.

Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV fought long and bitterly against Pope Gregory and his Italian and Norman supporters, with enough success to enthrone Antipope-to-be Clement III in 1080 and again in 1084-1100. But Gregory’s diplomacy extended to England, France, Spain (where he urged a crusade), Bohemia, Poland, Kievan Rus’, Byzantium and Armenia, and after his death Normans and anti-imperial Italians rallied behind Pope Urban II (r. 1088-1099).

William the Conqueror’s personal union of England and Normandy (Anglo-Normandy) ended with him; Robert inherited Normandy and England fell to William II Rufus (r. 1087-1100). William II brought Scotland into fealty and pressed into Wales.

The attacks of Alfonso VI of León & Castile upon the taifas brought him Toledo (1085) and the tribute of Granada and Seville. But his expansion was halted by the intervention of Yusuf ibn Tashfin at Sagrajas (1086).

**AD 1090: Multipolar. Great Powers: Eastern Kara-Khanids, Seljuks, Cumania, Patzinakia, Volga Bulgaria, Byzantine Empire, German (Holy Roman) Empire, León and Castile, Almoravids.**
Having conquered the Western Kara-Khanid Khanate by 1090, the Great Seljuk Empire promptly collapsed when both Seljuk Sultan Malik-Shah I and his domineering vizier Nizam al-Mulk died in 1092. Its successors included the emirates of Aleppo and Damascus, the atabeylik of Mosul, and a shrunken but still powerful Seljuk Sultanate of Rum (Anatolia).

In Kievan Rus’, Vsevolod was succeeded by his nephew Sviatopolk II Iziaslavich (r. 1093–1113). The Cumans raided Rus’ after the death of Vsevolod, and Sviatopolk joined his cousin and rival Vladimir Monomakh of Chernigov in a punitive expedition, which was repelled at the Stugna River in 1093. Thereafter, Sviatopolk and Vladimir were rivals in Rus’.

Ladislaus I of Hungary and his nephew Coloman the Learned (r. 1095–1116) were able to maintain themselves and begin to establish domination over Croatia. But (in 1097 or 1099) Cumania defeated Coloman’s expansion in their direction.

Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV continued to struggle against the Papal coalition in Italy, but was beleaguered by the revolt of his son Conrad (suppressed in 1098), and never succeeded in re-establishing the former imperial domination of the Roman church.

Freed to promote the papalist vision, Pope Urban II responded to a Byzantine call for help against the partitioned Great Seljuk Empire by preaching (1095) a crusade for the reconquest of the Holy Land. Byzantine Emperor Alexius I Comnenus (r. 1081–1118) was able to use Byzantine gold to supply the western adventurers who rallied to the First Crusade (1096–1099). The First Crusaders helped Alexius retake territory from the truncated Seljuk Sultanate of Rum even as they established their own Crusader statelets in Edessa, Antioch and Jerusalem at the expense of the lesser Seljuk successor states.

Byzantine gold also purchased the defeat of Pecheneg invaders in the Balkans. In 1091, the Pecheneg power was broken at the battle of Levounion by a Cuman-Byzantine alliance. The Pechenegs were again defeated by the Cumans in 1094, and thereafter sank into obscurity under Byzantium or Cumania. William II of England subjected Robert in Normandy (1091). In 1100, William was killed; his brother Henry I (r. 1100–1135) succeeded.

The leader of the taifa of Seville, pressed by Alfonso VI of León & Castile, called in the Almoravid Yusuf ibn Tashfin, who took control of the taifas except Zaragoza, and held Alfonso at bay for the rest of the century.
AD 1100: Multipolar. Eastern Kara-Khanids, Cumania, Volga Bulgaria, Byzantine Empire, Hungary, German (Holy Roman) Empire, León and Castile, Almoravids.

The Sequence of the 11th Century Central System Power Structure

- AD 1000: Multipolar.
- AD 1010: Multipolar.
- AD 1020: Multipolar.
- AD 1030: Multipolar.
- AD 1040: Multipolar.
- AD 1050: Multipolar.
- AD 1060: Multipolar.
- AD 1070: Multipolar.
- AD 1080: Multipolar.
- AD 1090: Multipolar.
- AD 1100: Multipolar.

The century was entirely multipolar. At no time did any subset of its Great Powers move out of the pack and thereby render the system tripolar, let alone bipolar or unipolar.

The above codings are of course available for use by other researchers, with the customary source acknowledgement.

We may reasonably wonder why the Central System power structure was so stable (sc. durable) even while it was so unstable (sc. war-prone). Concluding hypothesis: the durability of the multipolar systemwide power structure depended upon the fragility of the “states,” the “Powers,” which composed it, which tended to fracture before they could reach a position of systemwide influence.

Acknowledgements

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(1) Historical sources


(2) Conceptual sources: Great powers, Power structures, Polarity and its Forms


(3) Elements of the current project


