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## **Charismatic Leaders and Nation Building**

**Lydia Assouad**

**JEL Codes: D83, D74, N45, P48, Z13, Z18**

**Keywords: Leaders, Nation-Building, Culture, Propaganda**



# Charismatic Leaders and Nation Building

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## Abstract

Can leaders shape the evolution of social norms? I address this question by studying the role of Mustafa Kemal, or "Ataturk", the founder of modern Turkey, in spreading a new national identity. Using a generalized difference-in-differences design, which exploits time and geographic variation in Kemal's visits to cities, I test whether exposure to a charismatic leader affects citizens' take-up of the new national identity. I show that cities visited are more likely to embrace the common identity, as proxied by the adoption of first names in "Pure Turkish", the new language introduced by the state. I investigate the mechanisms and find that Kemal was more efficient in spreading a new identity compared to Ismet Inonu his second man, suggesting that he did not only have a pure informational effect. Using detailed information on the types of activities he held, I find that the effect is mostly driven by cities where he met with local elites, as opposed to visits where he met with the crowd. Results are not driven by places that already had nationalistic preferences and infrastructures. Overall, those results are consistent with the Weberian view that charismatic authority can play a role in legitimizing new social orders.

**Keywords:** Leaders, Nation-Building, Culture, Propaganda

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# 1 Introduction

The role of leadership in shaping historical outcomes is one of the oldest and most debated questions across the social sciences. On the one hand, several theories consider individual leaders as being key in influencing the trajectory of the societies they live in. We can track it back to Thomas Carlyle's "Great Men Theory of History", according to which "*the history of the world is but the biography of great men*" or to Max Weber's argument that charismatic authority is key to legitimize new social orders (Carlyle 1841, Weber 1947). There are indeed numerous examples of individuals that are regarded as having shaped the future of their nations: Alexander the Great, George Washington and other "founding fathers", Napoleon, Gandhi, Sukarno, Ho Chi Minh and Mandela.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, there is a large tradition minimizing the role of individuals in shaping ideologies or behaviors (Marx 1852, Spencer 1896). According to these theories, leaders are the simple products of their environment and play an anecdotal role compared to institutions or other deterministic social forces.

It is however difficult to test for these theories, due to several empirical challenges: On the supply side, leaders may target persuasion efforts towards audiences predisposed to adopt the ideology and norms they want to establish or to follow the movement they organized. On the demand side, some groups with a higher willingness to adopt new norms may meet or interact more with leaders. More generally, the ability of a leader to take action, the market of opportunity she exploits to affect outcomes and the network they develop are typically endogenous and often happen alongside other massive changes, such as wars or crises.

This paper seeks to contribute to this debate by studying the role of Mustafa Kemal, the founder of modern Turkey, in spreading a new national identity in the 1920s. I aim to answer the following questions: Can leaders successfully shape the evolution of social norms by influencing the adoption of a common identity? If so, how and under which conditions? The Turkish context provides a unique setting to study the effect of charismatic leaders on national identity. After the defeat of the Ottoman Empire during the First World War, resistance led by Mustafa Kemal secured the Turkish territory from

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<sup>1</sup>See Jones and Olken (2005), section II p837-840 for a more detailed discussion of this debate.

European armies and created a new nation-state in 1923. Mustafa Kemal, marshal during the resistance, rose to prominence for his role during the Battle of Gallipoli during WWI, a decisive Ottoman Victory that earned him a lot of prestige and support (Zurcher 2017). He took the leadership of the resistance and became the president of the new Republic at the end of the war. Between 1923 until his death in 1938, he led drastic nation-building reforms to create a new nation-state, that owed him the nickname "Ataturk", "father of the Turks". In order to promote a modern Turkish identity and explain the reforms implemented and planned, Kemal himself intensely travelled the new territory. He visited more than a fourth of all Turkish cities, with an average stay of one day per visit. His visits happened prior to the age of radio and mass media, in a context where the literacy rate was equal to 10%.

Studying the role of charismatic leaders, that is specific individuals able to coordinate groups, foster cooperation, shape beliefs or embody themselves a larger common identity, is particularly relevant in the context of nation-building. Leaders could be effective nation-building tool when state capacity is still low. Conceptually, leaders are mobile, cheap and can be used quickly, especially compared to other classic nation-building efforts such as education or transportation that typically require large infrastructure investments, substantial state capacity and time. They might therefore play an important role at the beginning of such efforts and could be prioritized to make change happen rapidly. Besides, prominent actions by leaders, including speeches, could constitute emotionally charged and symbolic experiences that help build the "imagined communities" that are nations (Anderson, 1983). The narratives built around their actions can create national stories and myths that are key to establish a collective memory and identity.

I create a novel historical city-level database using archival and secondary sources, with precise information on the campaign effort made by Ataturk. I exploit time and geographic variation in Ataturk's visits to cities in a dynamic difference-in-differences design and compare cities visited and cities not visited, to test whether exposure to a charismatic leader causally affects citizens' take-up of the new common identity. I create a new and original measure of national identity: the adoption of first names in "*Pure Turkish*", the new language introduced by the state. To identify the effect, I leverage

the large amount of historical information available on his itineraries, on the scheduling of his trajectories and on the purpose of his visits. For each trajectory, I know where he comes from and where he is planning to go. I also observe stops he makes on the way to a targeted city, due to the length of the travel. I focus on those stops, that are plausibly quasi-random conditional on road features. I compare visited cities to non-visited cities among a set of cities in between two targeted cities.

I find that people living in cities visited by Kemal are more likely to adopt first names in the new language: A visit increases the share of Turkish names by 1.7 percentage points, which represents an increase of almost 25% compared to the sample mean. In contrast, people living in cities visited by Ismet Inonu, his second man and the Prime Minister, do not adopt the new names as much as people living in cities visited by Kemal, suggesting that Kemal was more efficient in spreading the new identity and did not only have a pure informational effect. I also find that the effect is not driven by places that had more nationalistic infrastructures before the creation of the Republic, suggesting that he did not only made people more comfortable with publicly expressing previously known and held beliefs but might have created a new identity equilibrium. Finally, I use detailed information on the types of activities he conducted during his visits, and find that visits where he met with local elites and during which he made a speech were more efficient to spread the new identity compared to visits where he met with the crowd only.

This paper contributes to three literatures. First, it contributes to a growing literature on nation-building policies. This literature has focused on understanding why some states decide to nation-build (Alesina et al. 2015; Alesina and Reich 2015) and the effect of nation-building attempts on development (Miguel, 2004). More recently, several papers have estimated the effect of a specific nation-building tool, such as sport (Depretis-Chauvin et al. 2018), propaganda (Blouin and Mukand 2019), population resettlement programs (Bazzi et al. 2019) and education (Bandiera et al. 2018, Alesina et al. 2019, Bazzi et al. 2020). I focus on leadership, which this literature has yet to systematically test with quantitative data.

Second, it contributes to a literature on leadership.<sup>2</sup> This literature is first and fore-

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<sup>2</sup>See Ahlquist and Levi (2011) for a review of recent contributions from the political science, economics, and management literatures.

most theoretical, and has emphasized the role of leaders in shaping the outcomes of their society, because they can coordinate groups, persuade followers, shape identity or organize large movements (Caillaud and Tirole, 2007, Acemoglu and Jackson, 2015, Verdier and Zenou, 2018, Carvalho and Sacks, 2020). Acemoglu and Jackson (2015) emphasize that, while social norms are usually determined historically, some "prominent agents" whose actions are visible by all future agents, can leverage their greater visibility to affect social norms equilibria and expectation. In a seminal empirical work, Jones and Olken (2005) exploit the quasi-random deaths of leaders and show that, at a macro level, leaders matter for growth. There is fewer micro-evidence on the effect of leadership and on the mechanisms by which a leader matters (Cantoni and Yuchtman, 2020). Bassi and Rasul (2017) show that the pope's visits in Brazil affected fertility beliefs and behaviors. Selb and Munzert (2018) establish that Hitler's rallies had no effect on votes. Becker et al. (forthcoming) show that towns that had strong ties with Luther were more likely to adopt the Reformation in its early stages. This study contribute to the literature by providing micro-level evidence of how exactly leaders affect identity.

I finally contribute to the literature on social identity and cultural diffusion. This literature has shown how social and cultural norms are major determinants of economic behaviors. Such norms tend to be determined over the long run and to be remarkably persistent (Fischer 1989, Fernandez 2007, Giuliano 2007, Fernandez and Fogli 2009, Algan and Cahuc 2010, Voigtlaender and Voth 2012, Nunn 2012, Spolaore and Wacziarg 2013, Gorodnichenko and Roland 2011, 2018).<sup>3</sup> We however still know little about how such norms evolve in the short-run, although we do observe such rapid changes in history (Bursztyn et al. 2017; Giuliano and Nunn 2019). By showing how a leader can quickly affect social norms and the adoption of a common national identity, I also contribute to the understanding of the drivers and the dynamics of rapid cultural changes.

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 gives a brief overview of the historical context. Section 3, presents the data. Section 4 describes the empirical strategy used to estimate the causal effect of the visits on the diffusion of the new national identity. Section 5 presents the results on the effect of his visits. Section 7 concludes.

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<sup>3</sup>See Giuliano and Nunn (2019) for a recent review.

## 2 Historical background

### 2.1 Nation-Building era and the "Turkish revolution" (1923-1946)

After the defeat of the Ottoman Empire during the First World War, resistance led by Mustafa Kemal secured the Turkish territory from European armies and created a new nation-state in 1923. Kemal and his associates then implemented a set of radical top-down nation-building policies that affected all realms of society: political, legal, economic, social and cultural (Zurcher 2017, Yilmaz 2013). They abolished the Sultanate and the Caliphate and replaced the Sharia Law by European civil and penal codes. They implemented most of the classic homogenizing policies used in other historical contexts (Weber, 1976): they centralized and secularized the educational system and built new railroads to connect the different regions of the new territory. They also created a new "Pure Turkish language" using the Latin alphabet and new words coming from the Turkish folklore and oral tradition (Lewis 1999, Turkoz 2018). This set of reforms sometimes happened overnight has been called the "*Turkish revolution*", with the stated goal to create a Republic that is "secular", "modern", "westernized", more inclusive to women and built around the Turkish ethnicity (Zurcher 2017; Szurek 2016).

To encourage citizens to interact with the new institutions, the state used various tools: First, Kemal himself intensely visited the territory during the first years of the state. He visited more than a fourth of all cities to teach how to become a modern Turk and explain the reforms. His victory in Gallipoli - the first defeat of the British Navy during the Independence War - and the fact that he was regarded as having protected Istanbul from falling into the enemy's hands earned him a large support and prestige, and historians he might have played a key role in legitimizing the new nation. Second, the state imposed a new Republican curriculum and opened classes for adults. Finally, mostly in the 1930s, the Kemalist elites used heavier propaganda tools: They created local political clubs, the "Houses of People", which were organizing meetings, adult classes, theater plays and republican celebrations (Lamprou 2015). They nationalized the radio to broadcast state-led cultural propaganda from 1938 on (Ahiska 2010). If the stated objective of Kemalist elites was to create a modern democracy in the long-run, these reforms were implemented in an authoritarian manner (Bozarslan 2013). From 1923 to

1950, Kemal's party, the "Republican People's Party", was the only party ruling. The single-participation regime came to an end in 1950, with the first semi-democratic elections of the country.

## 2.2 The language reform

*"This Law will create a country speaking with one language, thinking in the same way and sharing the same sentiment", Rukru Kaya, Minister of Interior, 1934, quoted in Ulker (2008)*

A key policy in this general nation-building effort was the Language Reform. At the time, Turkish territory gathered several ethnic and religious groups speaking different dialects, such as Turkish, Arabic and Kurdish. Only 10% of the population was literate in Ottoman (Pamuk, 2018). Kemalist elites wanted to create a language easy to learn, that would be common across regions, ethnic groups and classes (Turkoz, 2018). The reform was implemented in two steps, quite quickly, and was described as a "*catastrophic success*" (Lewis 1999). In a first step, the alphabet was latinized in 1928. The second step consisted in the "purification" of the Ottoman vocabulary and was implemented in 1934.<sup>4</sup> The "purification" stage consisted in removing words of foreign origins (Arabic, Farsi etc.) and to replace them with words in "Pure Turkish" ("*Ozturkce*"), either invented or from the oral Turkish tradition and folklore. This process was partly implemented in a top-down fashion, with scholars and linguists creating lists of words in Ottoman, with their synonyms in Pure Turkish. Citizens could nevertheless participate voluntarily to the "word collection" effort and send their "own synonyms" to the central state (Lewis, 1999; Szurek, 2013). This process led to the creation and publication of booklets and dictionaries listing old ottoman words and their synonyms in the new language created by the state.

## 3 Data

In this section, I describe the historical dataset newly collected and digitized and the construction of the city sample used in the analysis.

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<sup>4</sup>For a detailed description of the concrete implementation of the language reform and the institutions and actors which contributed to it, see the Emmanuel's Szurek PhD thesis "Governing with words, a linguistic history of nationalist Turkey" ("Gouverner par les mots, une histoire linguistique de la Turquie nationaliste", 2013).

### 3.1 Treatment : Ataturk's visits (1923-1938)

The main source used to create the treatment variable is a book by Utkan Kocaturk (2009), which compiles information from Kemal's private diary and archival records of his official visits. The book contains detailed information on all his visits and his exact itineraries: I know whether a visit was planned - I call these targeted cities "termini cities"- or whether a visit was a simple stop in between two termini cities.<sup>5</sup>

For each visited city, I have the number of visits, the exact date of each visit, their duration, the activities he conducted and the members of the visiting delegation.<sup>6</sup> For each visit, I systematically cross-reference the information from the book with other external sources, such as academic articles and municipalities' websites. I also classify his activities, and distinguish between visits where he met with citizens and visits where he met with the local elites (or both).<sup>7</sup> I also know whether he conducted an activity related to the nation-building reforms, such as visiting a school or holding a speech talking about the reforms.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 1 shows the timeline of the visits. He visited in total more than a hundred and fifty cities, that is more than a quarter of all Turkish cities at the time. He conducted most visits in the first two years after the creation of the Republic, before the implementation of most of the reforms. The average length of the first visit was one day and a half.

**An example of a typical visit: Sivas, September 19th, 1928.** During his stay in Sivas, he held a meeting in the city's public square, to speak about the new alphabet and check the progress on the expansion of its use: "*Ataturk invited a butcher from the crowd,*

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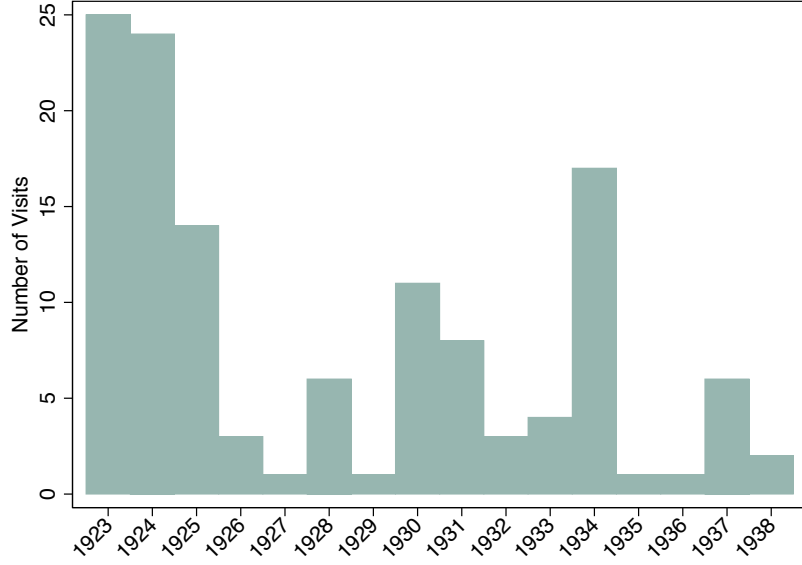
<sup>5</sup>In some cases, once he arrives to a terminus city, he seizes the opportunity to visits places nearby. Those localities are considered as stops and are included in my analysis

<sup>6</sup>For example, I observe whether he was accompanied by a woman - his wife Latife, his sister Makhbule, or his adoptive daughters Afet Inan or Sabiha Gokcen. This information will be useful in future analysis looking at long-run development outcomes by gender, as part of the new Turkish Identity was to promote equality between men and women.

<sup>7</sup>I consider he visited local elites if he had a meeting, lunch or dinner with local personalities, or if he went to official institutions such as the municipality building, the state house "Hukümet Binası" or military bases. If he went to public places - such as public squares, train stations and port, horse race stadiums etc., I consider he met with the crowd. He also makes speeches in public places but also during private meeting such as dinner.

<sup>8</sup>I also collected, dated and localized the entire corpus of speeches he made, for all of his visits. I plan to descriptively analyze this textual database and also to study the differential effect of his rhetoric.

**Figure 1: Number of cities visited for the first time, by year**



*Abidin, to the blackboard. Abidin came to the front and admitted that he did not know the new alphabet. In ten minutes, Ataturk taught him the vowels and showed him how to write his name. As Abidin learnt a new letter, repeated rounds of applause were shaking the square. When Abidin finally was able to write his name, the square erupted in cheers and shouted: "Long live Turkey and the great Ataturk !""*. Figure 2 is a photograph of the corresponding scene, where he describes the new latin alphabet to the crowd.

### 3.2 Outcome: First names as cultural proxy for national identity

Survey measures of identity and cultural values do not exist historically. An interesting alternative to track cultural diffusion and changes is to look at naming choices across time and geographic areas. This approach, based on a large literature in sociology and psychology, argues that first names are a good proxy for the cultural and social preferences of the name-givers (Mateos, 2013, Abramitzky, Boustan, and Eriksson 2018; Beck-Kudsen 2019; Fouka 2020). Indeed, naming is regarded as a defining moment in the life of an individual in all societies. Names are also very visible and relatively tough to change. They can signal an attachment to a number of groups such as gender, age, religion or nationality.

I construct a measure of adherence to the new Turkish identity by using the adoption

**Figure 2: Ataturk in Sivas Public Square, 1928**



Source: Fotograflara Ataturk, Istanbul Cumhuriyet, 1939

of first names in "*Pure Turkish*", the new language introduced by the state. I consider that giving your children a pure Turkish first names captures the adherence to the identity propagated by the new republic. The Turkish context is unique as it is possible to observe both old and new languages in the first names, given that in Turkish, first names are words.

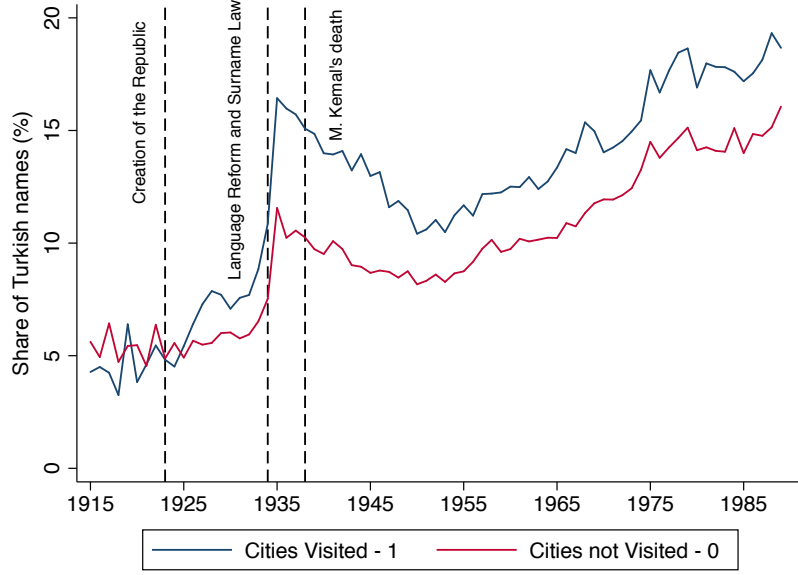
My primary datasource is the 2009 exhaustive individual census micro-data from the Ministry of Interior. The census reports the first and last names, the date of birth and the location of residence and birth of all Turkish individuals older than 18 years old in 2009. To identify first names in the new language, I collected and digitized all historical booklets and newspapers published in the 1930s to spread the new language, referenced by Turkoz (2017).<sup>9</sup> These sources contain lists of old words in Ottoman and their new

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<sup>9</sup>Osmanlicadan Turkce ye Cep Kilavuzu [Ottoman-Turkish Pocket Guide] (Istanbul: Devlet Basim Evi, 1935); Orbay, K.S. 1935. Oz Turkce Adlar ve Sozler: Yeni soy adlari [Names and Words in Ozturkce: The New Surnames]. Istanbul: Hilmi Kitap Evi. Behnan, (Sapolyo) Enver. 1935. Turk Soyadi: 3396 Turk adi [The Turkish Surname: 3396 Turkish Names] Maarif Kitap evi sahibi Tarik. Ankara: Koyhocasi Matbaasi; D.K.O. 1935. Ozturkce Secme Soy Adlari: Karsiliklari ve Manalari. Tefeyyuz Kitaphanesi; Karauguz, Akin Tahir. 1935. Oz Turk Adlari Kilavuzu. Zonguldak: Karaelmas Basimevi ; Besim Atalay, 1935 Turk Buyukleri veya Turk Adlari [Turkish Heroes and Turkish Names; Karauguz, Akin Tahir. 1935. Oz Turk Adlari Kilavuzu. Zonguldak: Karaelmas Basimevi. Riza Nour, "Noms propres turcs," Revue de Turcologie 5 (February 1935): 65-72; 65 (circulaire du Ministere de l'Education). Ulus Newspapers



**Figure 4: Aggregate trends in names, by visit status**



adherence to the nationalist ideology.<sup>11</sup> I also collect geographic information: elevation, coastal cities, distance to the capital, distance to battlefields from the 1919-1922 Independence War. Distance to minority villages are taken from Sakalli (2018). Figure 5 maps the visits and Table 1 presents the summary statistics of the main database. The full sample contains 504 cities, of which 128 were visited. Unsurprisingly, the visits are not random and visited cities are different from non-visited cities. Ataturk mostly visited the most populated and developed cities, the province centers, along the railway and at the nodes of the network, or on the coast and which had a nationalistic club already during the Ottoman era.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup>Information on population comes from the 1927, 1935 official population Censuses, from the Turkish Statistical Institutes (TUIK). Data on the Turkish rooms come from the book by Fusun Ustel, *Türk Ocaklari* 1912-1931

<sup>12</sup>The highest administrative divisions are the provinces, then the districts.

Figure 5: Maps of the Visits

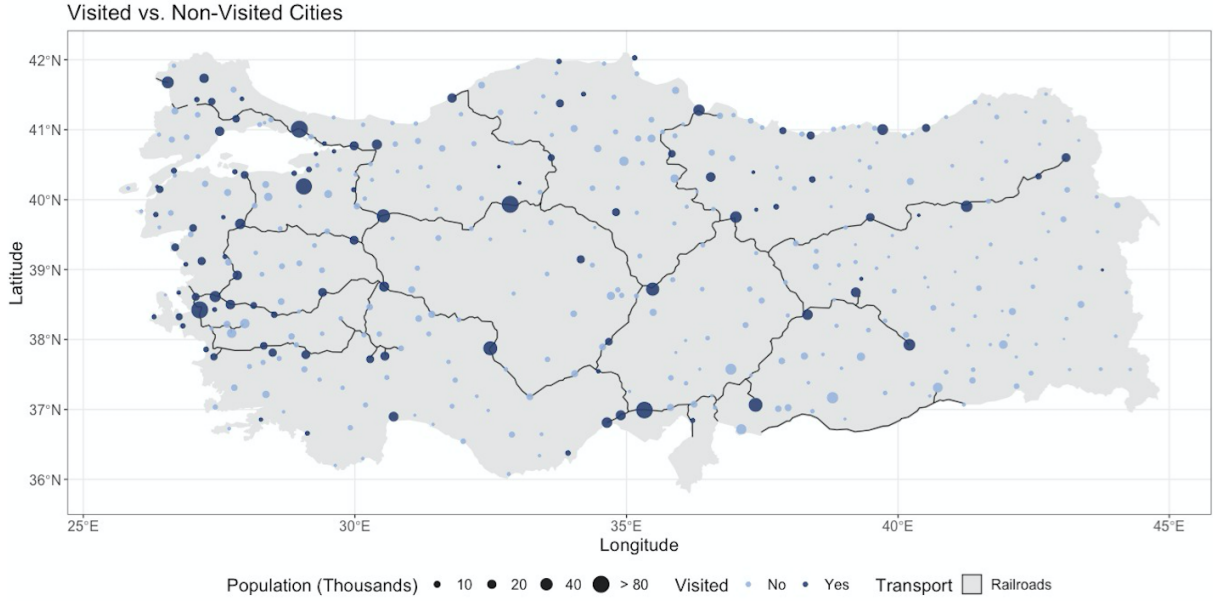


Table 1: Summary statistics of the main city-level database

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	All	Visited	Non Visited
	mean	mean	mean
Population in 1927	8674.95	21441.12	3910.76
Population in 1935	8161.92	20359.42	4009.58
Province center	0.11	0.37	0.03
District center	0.80	0.84	0.78
Distance to railway 1919, in km	92.91	81.54	96.84
Distance to Ankara in km.	433.96	401.46	445.03
Strong Presence of Armenians	0.14	0.09	0.16
Strong Presence of Kurds	0.20	0.08	0.24
Strong Presence of Greeks	0.17	0.19	0.17
Distance to the nearest battlefield in km.	111.45	88.37	119.30
Clubs before 1923	0.15	0.36	0.08
Elevation	694.91	443.46	780.51
Coastal city	0.16	0.31	0.11
Observations	504	128	376

In addition to the difference-in-differences strategy, I leverage the large amount of information that exists on the planning of his visits. I restrict my sample, and exclude all "termini" cities, that are cities he deliberately planned to visits. Those cities are typically province centers on the railway network, and with the largest population. I therefore focus my analysis on the stops he makes on the way to a targeted city, due to the length of the travel. I also exclude non-visited cities that are far from the railway and not on

the road to a targeted cities. Those cities are small and plausibly very different from the visited stops. Finally, I also remove remaining large cities that are outliers. This procedure enables me to obtain a comparable group of visited cities and non-visited cities among a set of cities in between two targeted cities. Table 2 presents the difference of means between visited and non-visited cities in the restricted samples. The two groups are balanced over the set of historical and geographic covariates.<sup>13</sup>

**Table 2: Difference of means between Visited and not Visited cities in the restricted sample**

	(1)	
	Difference of Means	
Population in 1927	-799.1	(-1.79)
Population in 1935	-737.9	(-1.81)
Province center	-0.0308	(-1.43)
District center	0.0352	(0.52)
Distance to railway 1919, in km	-0.214	(-0.01)
Distance to Ankara in km.	-24.47	(-0.95)
Strong Presence of Armenians	-0.0126	(-0.32)
Strong Presence of Kurds	0.0302	(0.71)
Strong Presence of Greeks	0.00110	(0.02)
Distance to the nearest battlefield in km.	11.62	(1.02)
Clubs before 1923	-0.0918	(-1.69)
Elevation	145.4	(1.83)
Coastal city	-0.0302	(-0.43)
Observations	205	

*t* statistics in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

## 4 Empirical Strategy

### 4.1 Predicting Ataturk's visits

In a first step, I run an OLS regression on the probability of a visit as a function of pre-treatment (that is pre-1923) historical and geographic covariates collected. The estimation results are nevertheless interesting in their own right, as little is known about how a leader targets her appearances. Table 3 shows the results: As one could expect, the administrative status of a city - which is highly correlated with population size- turns out

<sup>13</sup>I remove non-visited cities further away from 20km of the railway network. I remove cities larger than 12,000 inhabitants, as 90% of those cities are visited. Those additional restrictions do not affect the results and amount to more conservative assumptions. Results are also not unaffected by the choice of the cutoffs chosen. They are also robust to using matching procedures instead.

to be a consistent predictor of Ataturk’s visits. He also visited cities that had nationalistic clubs before 1923, and are therefore more likely to be nationalist, places on the coast, and less elevated. The administrative status, the presence of a nationalistic club, and the elevation remains significant predictors in the restricted sample. I systematically will include those variables as controls in my main difference-in-differences specification.

**Table 3: Predictors of Ataturk’s visits**

Predictors of Ataturk’s visits		
	(1)	(2)
	Full Sample	Restricted Sample
Province center	0.552*** (0.05)	0.772** (0.33)
District center	-0.045 (0.04)	-0.106 (0.08)
Distance to railway 1919, in km	-0.000 (0.00)	0.000 (0.00)
Distance to Ankara in km.	-0.000 (0.00)	0.000 (0.00)
Strong Presence of Armenians	0.054 (0.06)	0.191 (0.16)
Strong Presence of Kurds	-0.071 (0.06)	-0.083 (0.13)
Strong Presence of Greeks	-0.043 (0.05)	-0.040 (0.09)
Distance to the nearest battlefield in km.	-0.000 (0.00)	-0.000 (0.00)
Clubs before 1923	0.214*** (0.05)	0.221** (0.10)
Elevation	-0.000*** (0.00)	-0.000** (0.00)
Coastal city	0.173*** (0.05)	-0.075 (0.09)
Observations	504	205
R-squared	0.336	0.081

Standard errors in parentheses  
\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

## 4.2 Main specification

To test for the causal impact of leadership on the adoption of the national identity, I use a general difference-in-differences design, with the first visit in city  $c$  in year  $t$  as my treatment of interest. The specification is as follows, for city  $c$  and year  $t$ :

$$Y_{c,t} = \alpha_c + \gamma_t + \beta(Treated_c * Post_t) + \theta X_c * \gamma_t + \epsilon_{c,t} \quad (1)$$

where  $Y_{c,t}$  being the share of name in Pure Turkish (or other type of name) for city  $c$  in year  $t$ ;  $Treated_c * Post_t$  is a dummy equal to one if city  $c$  is visited for the first time in year  $t$ . I also include a vector of pre-treatment time in-varying historical and geographic controls,  $X_c$ , interacted with a year dummy. By doing so, I allow each control to have a differential effect each year, which is a rather conservative assumption. I also include city fixed effects  $\alpha_c$  and year fixed effects  $\gamma_t$  in all regressions, which allows me to control for any time-invariant differences between cities and for year-specific shocks common to all cities. I cluster all errors at the city level, as it is the level of treatment. The coefficient on  $Treated_c * Post_t$  is the coefficient of interest and captures the additional change in the share of Pure Turkish names in treated cities, relative to untreated cities, following a visit.

### 4.3 Pre-trends and event study

The main identification assumption underlying this strategy is that, in the absence of a visit, the average change in the share of name in Pure Turkish in treated and control cities would have been the same - the two types of cities would have continued to experience parallel trends. To check for this assumption, I look at the pre-trends by estimating the following event-study specification :

$$Y_{c,t} = \alpha_c + \gamma_t + \sum_{j=-N_0}^{N_1} \beta_j \mathbb{1}[J_{c,t} = j] + \theta X_c * \gamma_t + \epsilon_{c,t}$$

where  $[-N_0; N_1]$  is the window of dynamic effects around the event,  $J_{c,t} = t - E_{c,t}$  denotes event time, that is the time in year relative to the occurrence of the event. The  $\{\beta_j\}_{j=-N_0}^{N_1}$  coefficients give the full path of dynamic effects, that is pre-event effects necessary to check for pre-trends, but also post-event effects. The estimate represents the difference in share of names between the treated and control observations, before and after the visits. The omitted time period is one year prior to the visit and all coefficients should be interpreted with regards to this year.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>I group the observations over two years, because there can be few observations in some cities.

## 5 Results

### 5.1 Main result: Effect on names in "Pure Turkish"

Table 4 presents the main results on the effect of the visits on first names in "Pure Turkish". Cities visited are more likely to adopt first names in the new language, which proxies for adherence to the new identity. Column (5) presents the benchmark specification, including all control variables - the predictors of the visits: A visit increases the share of Turkish names by 1.71 percentage point, which represents an increase of 23% compared to the sample mean. In all specifications, the effect is positive, large and significant, and the coefficient is stable.

**Table 4: Effect of Ataturk's visits on first names in *Pure Turkish***

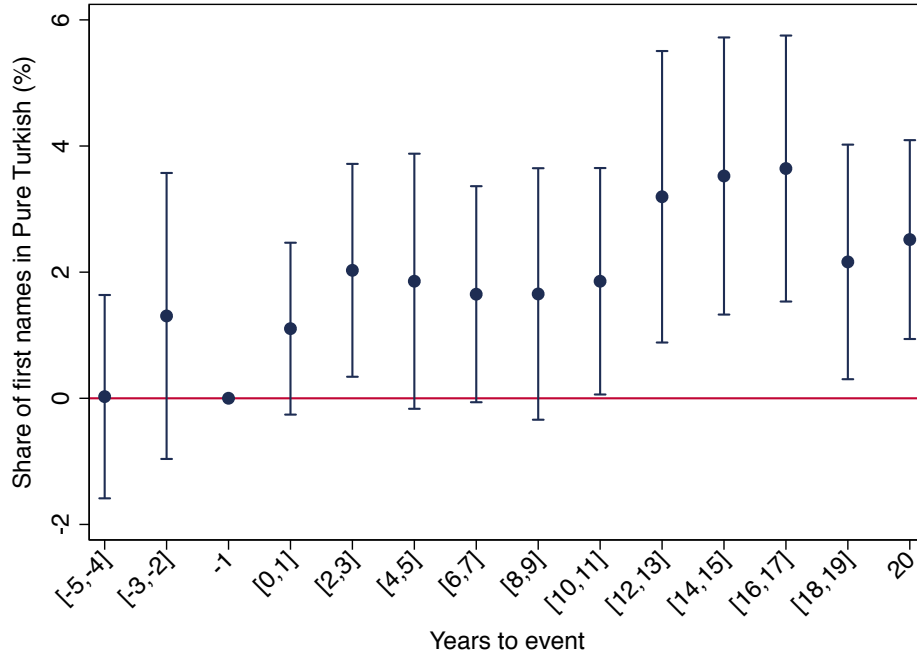
	Restricted Sample				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Treated*Post	1.93*** (0.70)	2.02*** (0.72)	1.90*** (0.72)	1.64** (0.65)	1.71** (0.67)
Province center		Y			Y
Club pre 1923			Y		Y
Elevation				Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
City FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Mean of outcome	7.475	7.475	7.475	7.475	7.475
s.d. of outcome	7.333	7.333	7.333	7.333	7.333
Observations	5971	5971	5971	5971	5971
R-squared	0.334	0.336	0.337	0.346	0.350

Standard errors clustered at the city level.

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Figure 6 plots the coefficient estimates of the event study,  $\{\beta_j\}_{j=-N_0}^{N_1}$ . Prior to the first visit, the estimated difference between the treatment and control cities is indistinguishable from zero, which allows me to estimate his causal effect. Following the visits, the share in first names in "Pure Turkish" in visited cities increases significantly relative to the share in control cities. Unsurprisingly, the effect takes approximately a year to appear, but then is persistent and still significant.

Figure 6: Effect on first names in Pure Turkish (Event-Study)



## 6 Mechanisms

### 6.1 A charismatic effect ?

I replicate the analysis, and compare Ataturk's visits to Ismet Inonu's visits, his "second man" and the Prime Minister of Turkey. This allows me to test whether Ataturk had a pure informational effect, or whether the effect channels through something else such as prestige or charisma. Anecdotal evidence suggest that Inonu was far less charismatic than Kemal. If Ataturk had a informational role only, one would expect that both Kemal and Inonu have the same effect on first names. I collect similar data on Inonu's visits.<sup>15</sup> In total, on the 504 main cities included in my sample, 155 cities where visited: 54 by Ataturk only, 26 by Inonu only and 55 by both, among which 40 were visited by Ataturk first. Table 5 presents the results of a similar difference-in-differences specifications as above. Columns (1) to (4) use the main restricted sample and Column (1) shows the benchmark effect of Ataturk's visits. Column (5) to (8) use the full sample. Coefficients are systematically larger and more significant for Ataturk's visits, even if Inonu's visits

<sup>15</sup>I know the places he visited and at which dates. Nevertheless, there are less information on the content of his visits as well as on how they were scheduled. For instance, I do not know which visits were targeted and which ones were simple stops on the road in Inonu's case.

had an effect as well. This suggests that Ataturk had an additional effect - potentially a prestige or charismatic effect.

**Table 5: Effect of Ataturk's visits vs Inonu's visits on first names in *Pure Turkish***

	Restricted City Sample				Full City Sample			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Treated Ataturk*Post	1.71** (0.67)		1.60** (0.70)	1.90** (0.79)	2.03*** (0.47)		1.94*** (0.47)	2.16*** (0.60)
Treated Inonu*Post		1.45 (1.03)	1.07 (1.09)	1.74 (1.19)		1.17** (0.53)	0.89* (0.53)	1.09** (0.54)
Treated Ataturk&Inonu*Post				-1.73 (1.21)				-0.70 (0.74)
Controls	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
City FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Mean of outcome	7.475	7.475	7.475	7.475	7.345	7.345	7.345	7.345
s.d. of outcome	7.333	7.333	7.333	7.333	6.912	6.912	6.912	6.912
Observations	5971	5971	5971	5971	14887	14887	14887	14887
R-squared	0.350	0.348	0.351	0.351	0.377	0.374	0.377	0.377

Standard errors clustered at the city level.\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1. Columns (1) to (4) use the restricted sample, that is the sample excluding termini visited cities, non-visited cities not on the railway and very large cities. Columns (5) to (8) use the full city sample (504 cities), as for Inonu, we do not know which cities are targeted, and cannot create a similar sample.

Interestingly, his effect does not seem to be driven by places that already had nationalistic club and therefore that were already more prone to adopt the new ideology and the new names. Table 6 presents results from heterogeneity analyses, depending on whether a city has a nationalistic club or not. Column (1) shows the benchmark effect. Column (2) shows the coefficient from the main treatment variable interacted with a dummy for the presence of a nationalistic club before 1923. Column (3) show the coefficients of both the main treatment and the interacted treatment. It appears that, although he targeted places with such clubs and nationalistic infrastructures, the effect is not stronger in those cities. This suggests that the effect is not only driven by people who always held nationalistic beliefs and who could be more comfortable with expressing them after a visit of the President defending those beliefs.

**Table 6: Heterogeneity analysis - presence of historical nationalistic clubs**

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Treated*Post	1.71** (0.67)		1.90** (0.77)
Treated*Post*Club		0.78 (1.18)	-1.10 (1.42)
Controls	Y	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y	Y
City FE	Y	Y	Y
Mean of outcome	7.475	7.475	7.475
s.d. of outcome	7.333	7.333	7.333
Observations	5971	5971	5971
R-squared	0.350	0.348	0.351

Standard errors in parentheses  
 \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

## 6.2 Effect on the crowd versus on local elite?

To understand better how exactly his visits affected naming choices, I use variation in the type of activities he conducted.<sup>16</sup> Table 7 displays the results. It appears that the average effect is mostly driven by cities where he made speeches and where he met and interacted with the elites, suggesting that a key mechanism behind the effect of his visits on naming patterns is the cooptation of local elites. Communicating - either publicly or privately- also seems to be a particularly efficient tool of propaganda.

<sup>16</sup>Meeting with the elite, the mass, both, whether a speech was made, whether he met with the elite and made a speech

**Table 7: Effect of Ataturk's visits, by type of activities**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Treated*Post	1.71** (0.67)	1.45** (0.73)	0.33 (1.03)	1.83** (0.82)	0.11 (1.15)
Treated*Post*Speech		2.28** (1.07)			1.97 (1.30)
Treated*Post*Elite			2.12* (1.23)		2.07 (1.38)
Treated*Post*Mass				-0.44 (1.16)	
Treated*Post*Elite/Speech					0.50 (1.75)
Controls	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
City FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Mean of outcome	7.475	7.475	7.475	7.475	7.475
s.d. of outcome	7.333	7.333	7.333	7.333	7.333
Observations	5971	5971	5971	5971	5971
R-squared	0.350	0.351	0.352	0.350	0.352

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Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

## 7 Conclusion and next steps

Can leaders shape the evolution of social norms? In this paper, I answer this question by studying the role of Mustafa Kemal in spreading the new Turkish identity during the first years of the creation of Turkey in 1923-1938. I create a new historical city-level database, with detailed information on his visits as well as other historical and geographic characteristics. I build a new and unique measure of national identity: the share of first names in Pure Turkish, the new language introduced by the state to homogenize its population. I show that cities visited are more likely to embrace the common identity, using a generalized difference-in-differences design that exploits time and geographic variation in Kemal's visits to cities and information on the planning of his visits. I compare the effect of his visits to the ones of Ismet Inonu, his second man, and show that Kemal was more efficient, suggesting that he did not only have a pure informational effect. Using detailed information on the types of activities he held, I find that the effect is mostly driven by cities where he met with local elites, as opposed to visits where he met with the crowd. Cooptation of local elites during the visits is therefore a key mechanism behind the spread of the new identity. Overall, those results are consistent with the Weberian view that charismatic authority can play a role in legitimizing new social orders. They provide new empirical micro evidence to the old debate over the relative roles of individuals and deterministic forces in shaping historical outcomes, but also to a large theoretical literature in economics that has emphasized the importance of cultural leaders for development. As a next step, I plan to use within-family variation as additional robustness, and to build an instrumental variables based on the road features and the schedule of his visits to look at other outcomes, including economic and political outcomes.

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