

## ***Abstract:***

Can leaders successfully shape beliefs and social norms? I address this question by studying the role of Mustafa Kemal, the founder of modern Turkey, in spreading a new national identity. Using a generalized difference-in-differences design, that exploits time and geographic variation in Kemal's visits to cities, I test whether direct 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. This is consistent with the Weberian view that "charismatic authority" can play a role in legitimizing new social orders.