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The Iconography of the Turkish Lira

by David Covey

Turkey seems to forever be at a balancing point—between East and West, secular and Muslim, autocratic and liberal, ancient and modern. As a rising economic power in a region plagued by turmoil, it has enormous strategic importance as both a center of power and a model for others. Pulled in multiple directions by its diverse population, few outcomes seem implausible for Turkey. In the coming decades, it could become a model for Western integration as a full EU member, an Islamist state seeking to regain Ottoman glory, and just about anything in between. With such high stakes, the political battle to determine Turkey’s future direction is intense.

At the center of that political system for the last fifteen years has been the ruling Justice and Development Party, or AKP, and its leader, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Once Europe’s darling and *Time’s* “Person of the Year” for his push toward liberalization and EU membership, Erdogan has lately been lumped with Vladimir Putin for the heavy-handed nature by which he has consolidated power. Under Erdogan’s leadership, Turkey’s direction has swung from one extreme to the other.

Understanding Erdogan and the AKP is at the heart of understanding Turkey today. How has it sought to position itself in the eyes of Turkey’s voters? What has it tried to signal to political players within and without its borders? This paper seeks to shed some light on these questions through a careful examination of the decisions the AKP made around the iconography of the Turkish lira in the 2009 emission.

Such decisions are easily overlooked, but they reveal important insights into AKP’s strategy. As Erdogan said, “Money symbolizes power, prestige and independence, just like the flag or anthem” (Hurriyet 2010). Through its design, money can subtly communicate powerful messages about national identity. Its value and

ubiquity mean that those messages are widely felt. A political party could co-opt this symbol to advance themes consistent with its own political positioning.

The 2009 currency was not the first time design had been used as a political tool in Turkey. As part of his transformation of Turkish society, founding father Mustafa Kemal Atatürk issued a new currency between 1937 and 1939 that would represent the values of the state. A significant stylistic change was made: The currency would no longer be covered in Arabic script but would use the Latin alphabet. As the Turkish people used the currency in their day-to-day lives, this change would reinforce the need to learn the Latin alphabet to accurately make financial transactions. Since this first emission, the design of the lira has undergone many changes that give us insight into the issuing government of the time.

In addition to providing us insight into the AKP, this paper also seeks to answer two questions from the literature on currency iconography. First, does the history of the Turkish lira's iconography fit the predicted trend of a shift from state actors and materialism toward non-state actors and postmaterialism? Second, do the changes really represent the achievement of state goals or are they simply the result of diffused norms? In the latter case, they would lack much explanatory power about the AKP's mindset.

Through a detailed categorization and analysis of the lira's iconography, I find that Turkey does indeed fit the trend toward individual actors and postmaterialism. This supports Hymans' theory of norm diffusion in the pan-European area (2010). However, unlike the Eastern European states he studies, the design change occurs quite suddenly for Turkey rather than through a gradual progression.

This suggests a different mechanism may have been behind the design change. Interestingly, the change in the lira's iconography was closely correlated with the rise of AKP, which was voted into power in 2002, just before the Turkish currency reform movement started in 2003, and stayed in power through the final reform phase of 2009. I argue that AKP sought to use the iconography of the lira as a tool to signal the party's progressive intentions for both an international and domestic audience.

This conclusion partially supports Hymans' world society theory (2010), finding that AKP's desire to be accepted as part of the international community and especially the EU was a contributing factor in causing the iconographic change. However, the world society theory does not prove to be a sufficient explanation. Turkey had been trying to join the EU since 1959, yet the lira's iconography remained stubbornly state/materialist themed until 2009. In addition, AKP was arguably more concerned with the domestic political payoffs of pursuing EU membership than achieving international respect. Due to these factors, I conclude the state goals model is a more useful framework for understanding currency iconography, at least for Turkey. Turkey appears to be in Europe's cultural orbit, but, like the post-Soviet states in Cooper's analysis (2014), is not fully riding the iconographic tide of Western Europe.

Iconographic Trends in the History of the Lira

Norm Diffusion or State Goals?

As mentioned briefly above, there are two main contrasting perspectives about the process of changes in currency iconography. The first argument is advocated by Hymans, who argues that the currency iconography of Western European states has converged around certain norms (2004) and that Japan (2005) and Eastern European states (2010) have also followed these norms. The chief cause of this norm diffusion is the “states’ desire for legitimacy and recognition as normal members of the society of states” (Hyman 2010: 98). This desire to participate in the popular trends of the day leads the state to mimic the iconographic choices of its neighbors. Hawkins likewise finds evidence of European norms influencing currency design choices in Tunisia, due to the strong French influence (2010).

The second perspective focuses on how currency iconography is used to further the goals of the state. Helleiner shows that the rise of national currencies was correlated with the rise of the nation-state, and outlines several different ways in which currencies can serve as a tool for building a national identity (2003). These include cultivating a collective memory, creating a shared economic language and community, and creating a sense of trust in the state when managed properly. Unwin and Hewitt find support for this perspective in their analysis of East European currency, in which they see states using depictions of past events and individuals to create a sense of shared experience in their people (2001). Cooper confirms the importance of state goals in currency design in his study of the newly formed post-Soviet states and finds an emphasis on historical figures and state symbols rather than Hyman’s predicted post-materialism (2014).

Which Images?

A common factor between the analysis of Cooper and Unwin and Hewitt is that the main subject of analysis is the primary image on the front of the banknote (Cooper 2014: 6; Unwin and Hewitt 2001: 1013). In some cases, Cooper also considers other significant images on the front of the note. The images on the back are not examined, as they are assumed to support the theme of the primary front image and would not provide additional insight (Unwin and Hewitt 2001: 1013). While this choice provides consistency of analysis between a wide sample of banknotes as well as an easier creation of a banknote database, it seems limiting when looking at the Turkish lira over time.

Hymans expands upon this perspective to additionally consider other human images on the back of the note (2004: 11). This is the model I will be using for my analysis of the lira. Except for three notes in the first series of 1927, every lira note since has depicted either the country’s founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, or the second head of state, İsmet İnönü, as the primary image on the front. If this were the only image on the lira to consider, it would force the conclusion that essentially nothing has changed in Turkish banknote design in the last century—a conclusion I would

consider wildly inaccurate. In addition, despite the unchanging theme on the front of the lira, the iconography on the back varies significantly, casting into doubt the aforementioned assumption by Unwin and Hewitt that these images consistently align with the same theme of the primary front image.

I find much richer results by expanding my analysis to the images on the back of the note. In the case of currencies with a similar structure to the lira (e.g., having the same individual on the front side of nearly every note) it may be useful to consider this expanded analysis for future research. This design choice is used in many currencies, including those of Brazil, China, and Thailand.

While I find variation between the themes on the front and the back of the lira, I did not find such variation within images on the same side. The location and size of these images change between emission series, making it difficult to compare notes across time. For my analysis, I will consider the primary image on the back to represent the theme of that side.

Typology

Drawing on the previously mentioned literature, I consider several methods for categorizing the images on the lira in order to gain diverse perspectives on its iconography.

Hymans focuses his analysis on human figures, categorizing them into two spectrums: the locus of actorhood and the nature of goals (2004: 12). He breaks down locus of actorhood into three categories: state, society/classes, and individuals. "State" represents human figures with historical or mythological ties to the country; "society/classes" represents the general masses, classes therein, or regional groups of human actors; and "individuals" represents identifiable non-state actors, or diverse persons. Nature of goals is broken down into three levels: traditionalist, materialist, and postmaterialist. "Traditional" represents classical or antique imagery; "Materialist" represents economic or social endeavors; and "Postmaterialist" signifies cultural pursuits. Finally, Hymans looks at how the use of these categories changes over time. I have used his chosen time periods from his most recent publication on the topic to allow for consistency in comparison with the trends in Europe. These time periods are bookended by major global turning points: the first from 1919–45 between the end of WWI and the end of WWII, the second until the global explosion of 1968, the third until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the fourth until the present day (Hymans 2010: 101).

While the prevalence of human images in the currencies that Hymans analyzes allows for a focus on said images, this pattern does not hold useful for all currencies. Cooper expands upon Hymans' typology to consider other categories of images beyond human figures, including manmade objects, events, natural, and a catchall "other" category (6–7). In addition, he looks at the dimensions of gender and historical time periods (6, 8–9). In the case of the Turkish lira, I find that this typology adds additional understanding, as the majority of the images on the back of the lira do not depict human figures. For my analysis, I will look at the same categories.

Table 1: Iconographic Choices*

	Traditional	Materialist	Postmaterialist
State	State symbols in classical/antique garb, classical gods (e.g., Athena, 'Columbia') or purely ornamental figures.	Historical heads of state, generals, other statesman (e.g., George Washington, Douglas MacArthur).	Representatives of 'official culture' (e.g., Francis Scott Key, Edward Teller).
Society/ Classes	Classical/antique imagery of mass, class, sector or region representative (e.g., allegorical figures 'Industry', 'commerce.')	Imagery of real world mass, class, sector or region representatives at work (e.g., farmers in the fields).	Imagery of real-world mass, class, sector or region representatives (e.g., kids playing baseball).
Individual	Historical non-state actors from classical/antique era or representations of individual-level virtues (e.g., Aristotle, St Paul, 'Faith').	Historical non-state actors who made significant social or economic contributions (e.g., Margaret Sanger, Henry Ford).	Historical non-state actors who made significant contributions to the sciences or the arts and letters (e.g., Albert Einstein, Charles Ives, Herman Melville).

*From Table 1 in Hymans 2010

Where a currency was reissued with the same denomination and basic design, I do not count the currency twice in my database. All information on dates and images has been taken from the database of the Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey (2014).

Hymans' Methodology: Human Images, Front and Back

On the front of the lira, I find an overwhelming state/ materialist theme throughout the history of the lira. As mentioned, either Atatürk or İnönü is depicted on the front of nearly every note. Looking at the back of the currency gives variety to the dataset. While the sample size is small due to the majority of images being non-human, we can still draw some interesting conclusions. There has been a shift from society/ materialist images, to state/ traditional images, and to non-state individuals/ postmaterialist images on the back of the currency.

Hymans' Methodology: Adjusted (2009 highlighted)

However, a problem with the above analysis is that Hymans has chosen cutoffs for time periods that do not give an accurate understanding of the lira. When the 1990–2009 period is combined, as in the previous table, it appears that there has been a gradual shift toward depicting non-state individuals and postmaterialist goals, with state/ materialist themes still characterized in the dominant images.

Table 2: Actors (Hymans)

Epoch of Currency Issue	State	Society	Individual	Total N
1919–45	15 (88%)	2 (12%)	0 (0%)	17 (100%)
1946–68	19 (83%)	4 (17%)	0 (0%)	23 (100%)
1969–89	12 (86%)	0 (0%)	2 (14%)	14 (100%)
1990–present	21 (78%)	0 (0%)	6 (22%)	27 (100%)
Total N	67 (83%)	6 (7%)	8 (10%)	81 (100%)

Table 3: Goals (Hymans)

Epoch of Currency Issue	Traditional	Materialist	Postmaterialist	Total N
1919–45	0 (0%)	17 (100%)	0 (0%)	17 (100%)
1946–68	0 (0%)	22 (96%)	1 (4%)	23 (100%)
1969–89	3 (21%)	10 (71%)	1 (8%)	14 (100%)
1990–present	0 (0%)	20 (74%)	7 (26%)	27 (100%)
Total N	3 (4%)	69 (85%)	9 (11%)	81 (100%)

However, this has not been the case and such a conclusion would be inaccurate. In the period from 1990–2008 there was a shift back toward state and materialist goals from the traditionalism of the previous period, and then in 2009 there was a dramatic shift toward individual and post-materialist themes, which shared the currency.

Comparison to European Trends

With the aforementioned adjustments to Hymans' methodology, I find evidence that Turkey has made a recent switch to the pattern Hymans predicted. In comparison to Eastern and Western Europe, Turkey's iconography is very close to representing the standard percentages of notes that promote individual/postmaterialist themes.

It is interesting to note that the manner in which Turkey changed its currency iconography was not the gradual transition over decades that occurred throughout

Table 4: Actors (Hymans Adjusted)

Epoch of Currency Issue	State	Society	Individual	Total N
1919–45	15 (88%)	2 (12%)	0 (0%)	17 (100%)
1946–68	19 (83%)	4 (17%)	0 (0%)	23 (100%)
1969–89	12 (86%)	0 (0%)	2 (14%)	14 (100%)
1990–2008	15 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	15 (100%)
2009–present	6 (50%)	0 (0%)	6 (50%)	12 (50%)
Total N	67 (83%)	6 (7%)	8 (10%)	81 (100%)

Table 5: Goals (Hymans Adjusted)

Epoch of Currency Issue	Traditional	Materialist	Postmaterialist	Total N
1919–45	0 (0%)	17 (100%)	0 (0%)	17 (100%)
1946–68	0 (0%)	22 (96%)	1 (4%)	23 (100%)
1969–89	3 (21%)	10 (71%)	1 (8%)	14 (100%)
1990–2008	0 (0%)	14 (93%)	1 (7%)	27 (100%)
2009–present	0 (0%)	6 (50%)	6 (50%)	12 (100%)

the rest of Europe. Instead, Turkey appeared to return toward materialist/state motifs in the 1990s until a dramatic shift was made in 1999. While the end result is in line with Hymans' theory of European norm diffusion, the process of how they got there is less obvious.

From my perspective, it seems that a norm diffusion process would happen gradually, with years of soft cultural influence changing perspectives among the populace and the state. From the data, I find little evidence of such a process occurring in Turkey, suggesting that another force, namely state goals, may have been more influential over the redesign process.

Figure 1: Depictions of Non-State Individuals

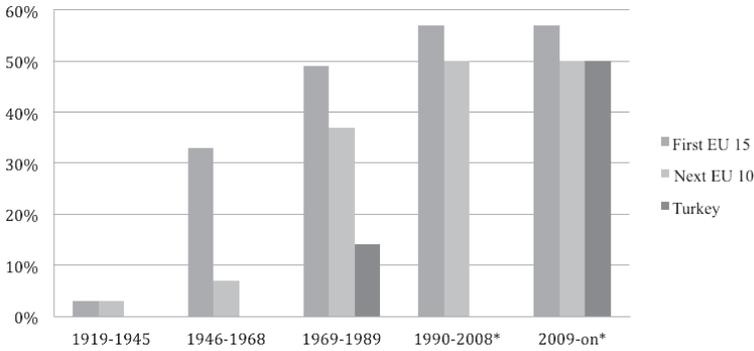
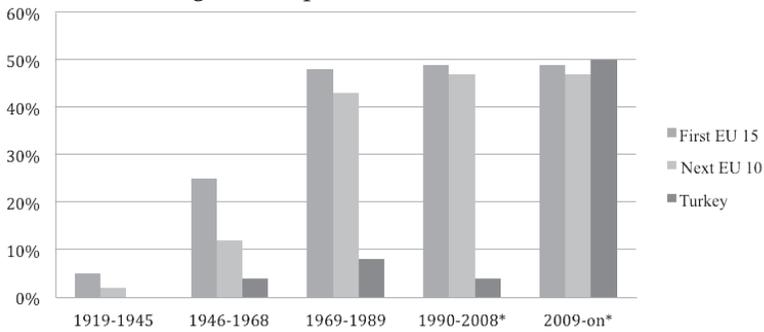


Figure 2: Depictions of Postmaterialism



*First EU 15 and Next EU 15 data was originally provided in Hymans 2010 for the years 1990–2009. This data has been assumed to remain constant between the two time periods for the sake of this analysis.

Adjusted Cooper Methodology—Front and Back

Cooper’s methodology for categorization offers an additional perspective on the imagery of the lira banknotes. I made an adjustment to his methodology in considering both sides of the note. While human figures are obviously the dominant category for the front side of the lira, man-made objects are the most common category for the back side and deserve a closer examination.

In Table 7, I have further divided the types of man-made objects identified by Cooper into the two categories already examined with Hymans’ methodology in order to gain more insight into the previous analysis: society and state. I find that state-associated iconography proves to be the most common in the history of the lira. However, after the first period, society-associated iconography is depicted nearly as often. It makes up 50%, 33%, and 60% of the images over the next three periods respectively. These results reflect a move away from state iconography in the lira after 1945, but not necessarily toward individual actors or postmaterialist goals.

Table 6: Figure Types (Cooper)

	Human Figures	Man-Made Objects	Events	Natural	Other
Front	64 (97%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (3%)	0 (0%)
Back	17 (26%)	36 (55%)	0 (0%)	11 (17%)	2 (3%)
Combined	81 (61%)	36 (27%)	0 (0%)	13 (10%)	2 (2%)

Table 7: Figure Themes (Cooper)

	Society					State		Total N
	Relig.	Cultural	Industry	Agri.	Transp.	Military	Gov.	
1919–45	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (20%)	4 (40%)	4 (40%)	10 (100%)
1946–68	0.5 (4%)	4 (31%)	1 (8%)	0 (0%)	1 (8%)	4.5 (35%)	2 (15%)	13 (100%)
1969–89	0 (0%)	1 (33%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (66%)	3 (100%)
1990–2009	0 (0%)	3 (30%)	3 (30%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1.5 (15%)	2.5 (25%)	10 (100%)
Total N	0.5 (1%)	8 (22%)	4 (11%)	0 (0%)	3 (8%)	10 (28%)	12.5 (35%)	36 (100%)

Nonhuman objects can be more difficult to conclusively categorize on a traditional, materialist and postmaterialist spectrum. Devising a methodology that would allow for consistent coding of these types of images in a way that could be compared with Hymans' results would be an area for further research.

The State-Driven Redesign Process

As seen in the above analysis, Turkey's 2009 currency redesign fits well into the postmaterialist trend predicted by Hymans. But the question remains: What was the mechanism by which this shift occurred? Was it through a process of norm diffusion from Western Europe as Hymans has suggested, or was it related to state goals as Helleiner, Cooper, and Unwin-Hewitt would counter? As mentioned previously, the sudden shift toward postmaterialism in 2009 casts doubt on the diffusion theory and Hymans' predictions. In this section, I will seek to further show that the postmaterialist redesign was driven more by the state's goals than diffusion.

I find parallels between the 2009 lira redesign in Turkey and Mwangi's analysis of African currency in the early nineteenth century. Mwangi shows the images chosen for the Kenyan banknotes were primarily a reflection of the "social self-imagination of

dominant classes” (2002: 58). In Kenya, banknote imagery changed with transformations in the philosophy of the ruling party. With rising nationalist discontent among the African population, the romanticized landscapes of Africa and depictions of the “noble savage” were not politically helpful (52). These images were changed to instead depict cash crops, such as cotton and tea, that emphasized the economic success derived from cooperation between the British and native Africans (55).

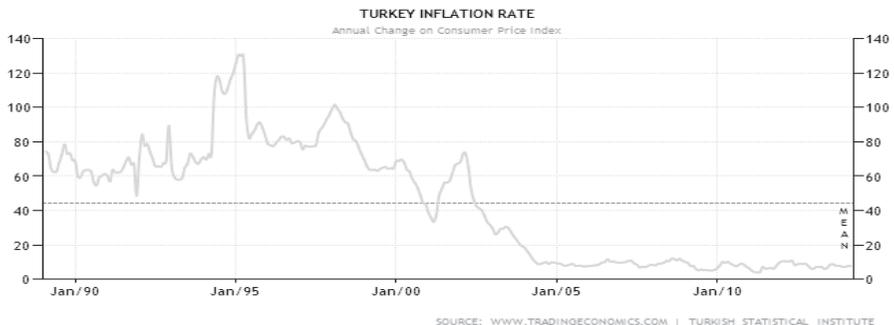
Mwangi mentions that norms around colonialism were changing on a global level, which certainly may have played a role in influencing the shift away from paternalistic imagery. However, from his analysis it seems clear that the change was primarily an attempt by the state to repair its disintegrating legitimacy and to bolster its chances for political survival rather than to align itself with international trends. In examining the circumstances around the 2009 lira redesign, I believe that the decisions around the iconography were made for similar reasons.

Penrose cautions against automatically assuming that the state is in complete control of currency design (2011: 431–32), so I will seek to make the causal link as clear as possible with the information available.

The currency redesign process in Turkey was part of the larger initiative of planning and managing the transition from the pre-2000s hyper-inflated Turkish lira to the new Turkish lira. Beyond the detrimental effects of high inflation, the high-denomination itself was causing a multitude of problems. The abundance of zeros made it easy for people to make mistakes in calculating prices, discouraging economic transactions denominated in the lira. Accounting with the lira became an especially large burden, with some software unable to process the large numbers (Bayir 2010: 7).

As for the nation-building power of the currency, the Turkish Central Bank specifically points out that “large denominations ruined Turkish Lira’s credibility by weakening people’s attitude towards national currency” (Bayir 2010: 5). If no one wants to use the money, they will not pay attention to what themes it depicts; in fact, the low credibility of the currency might negatively affect the perception of the images thereon. Portrayed on a weak, poorly esteemed currency, Atatürk and his

Figure 3: Turkey’s Inflation Rate (Annual Change on CPI)



first phase would remove six zeros and rename the currency the “New Turkish Lira” and be completed 1 January 2005. The second phase would drop the prefix “new” on 1 January 2009.

To manage the process, a steering committee was formed with representatives from the Turkish Central Bank, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Industry and Trade, State Institute of Statistics, Treasury, Banking Regulation and Supervisory Agency, and Capital Markets Board (Bayir 2010: 12). The leadership of the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Industry and Trade are appointed directly by the prime minister and the president (Grand National Assembly 2010: 53). The State Institute of Statistics is governed under the prime minister, the Banking Regulation and Supervisory Agency is under the president, and the Capital Markets Board is under the Ministry of Finance. The Central Bank is nominally independent from the government, but its true independence is considered questionable as its governors are all appointed by the parliament (Gökbudak 1996). By controlling the presidency and parliament from 2002 onward, AKP leadership had the ability to influence every member of the steering committee in decision making regarding the new currency.

The 2005 transition was a relatively smooth one, and the populace quickly adjusted to the New Turkish Lira (Bayir 2010). To maintain a sense of continuity between the currencies and provide for easier recognition of the banknotes, denominations with the same purchasing power were produced in the same colors and designs, except with six zeros removed from the denomination. However, the steering committee ultimately wanted to make a clean break with the images associated with past hyperinflation and prepared a redesign of the banknotes and coins as part of the second phase.

The process behind the redesign suggests that creating new postmaterialist images was not considered as the main goal of the project; the redesign was part of a much larger process to continue to control inflation and redenominate the currency. The primary purpose behind the project seems to have been restoring trust in the currency itself, rather than restoring trust in the government or promoting AKP’s perspective to the populace.

That said, AKP could have chosen any number of images for the currency. The easiest solution would have been to stick with the same images and themes that people recognized. However, when the opportunity presented itself, AKP moved to use new iconography that would bolster its legitimacy, just as the Kenyan government had done in Mwangi’s case study. The fact that it chose to make a break from the dominant state/materialist imagery of the past eighty years in favor of individual/postmaterialist themes merits further investigation into AKP’s interests.

AKP’s Political Calculus

To understand AKP’s interest in redesigning the currency, it is first necessary to understand the party’s history. AKP was founded in 2002 from the remnants of the main conservative Islamist party. That party had been outlawed by the judiciary for violating Turkey’s constitutional commitment to secular rule. This disbanding of Islamist parties

was not a unique occurrence in Turkey; it was the fourth time some form of AKP had been forced to dissolve and reincarnate itself as a new party. Earlier Islamist parties had been banned in 1971, overthrown by a coup in 1980, overthrown by another coup in 1998, and then banned again in 2001 (Taspinar 2012). The strategy of the leaders of the disbanded party would be to form a new party with essentially the same Islamist goals, which would then be outlawed a few years later, restarting the cycle.

However, new AKP leadership decided to pursue a more pragmatic route. Rather than readopt the conservative Islamist stances of the past, AKP leadership made a conscious choice to present themselves as something different. AKP leadership carefully espoused secularism as their governing rule, arguing that “Islam is not an institution of the state but rather a social compass for society” (Tol 2011). Erdogan has said, “We are not an Islamic party and we also refuse labels such as Muslim-democrat” (Taspinar 2012). While the party leadership has deep roots in its Islamist predecessors (Erdogan once spent time in prison for publicly reading a poem promoting Islam), it strategically positioned itself as a Turkish version of Germany’s Christian Democrats (Rahigh-Aghsan 2011).

Nevertheless, the secularist elements of the state, known as the Kemalists, were deeply suspicious of AKPs true intentions. With power bases in the judiciary and the military, they represented an ever-present threat to the party’s political survival through the possible instigation of an investigation or a coup. For AKP to remain in power, it would have to appease the Kemalists by appearing sincere in its new liberal leanings. As a result, AKP decided to adopt a liberal, pro-Western platform that primarily focused on economic growth (Saatcioglu 2010). The party chose a light bulb as its symbol, signifying a commitment to scientific progress and modernization.

Perfectly aligned with this strategy was a new willingness by the European Union to consider Turkey as a potential member (Akçapar 2007). At first glance, membership in the EU would seem to be the goal of the Kemalists, AKP’s political opponents. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the spiritual leader of that movement, worked to turn the remnants of the decaying Ottoman Empire into a modernized Western state (BBC 2014). He carefully studied Western European governments and used them as his model for what Turkey was to become. He instituted secular reforms, such as allowing the use of alcohol, banning headscarves in public, switching from an Islamic calendar and writing system to a more Western calendar and script, and abolishing the caliph. Membership in the EU would represent the fulfillment of Atatürk’s ultimate goal of transforming Turkey into a recognized European state and seem to be the goal of the opposing Kemalists, not AKP.

Yet despite how counterintuitive it seemed at first glance, a pro-EU stance by AKP actually benefited the party in several ways. First, it established their credibility as supporters of liberal, secular policy (İçener and Çagliyan 2011). This credibility delegitimized the accusations of the opposition by demonstrating that AKP really was pursuing pro-Western policy. Second, EU reforms presented the possibility of weakening

the power of the military and judiciary, AKP's enemies in the Turkish state (Taspinar 2012). AKP could push for EU reforms without appearing to directly undercut them. Finally, EU membership gave hope for religious freedom reforms that were important to orthodox Muslims, such as the right for women to wear headscarves in public (Saatçioğlu 2010).

AKP latched on to the opportunity and made pursuing EU membership the central pillar of its platform. To the public, AKP leaders were effusive in their enthusiasm for the project. Erdogan declared that EU membership was the greatest project ever after the founding of the republic (Içener and Çağliyan 2011). Reforms began in earnest and Turkey made significant progress toward future accession (Siitonen 2008). It was in this environment that the first phase of the currency redesign began. AKP had a clear interest in signaling its progressive intentions to both its domestic audience—for its political survival—and its international audience—for the purpose of successfully gaining EU membership. New currency iconography that imitated European individual and postmaterialist norms could help accomplish that goal in the eyes of both audiences.

The dramatically different redesign allowed AKP to disassociate itself from previous Islamist governments. A clean break from past eras was symbolized by the iconographic break from eighty years of state actors and materialist themes. The redesign also served as an attempt to subtly manipulate the Turkish people's perception of the party and its values. If AKP's public image were European, its political enemies would have a higher credibility barrier to overcome in making a public case for another ban of the party. In the past, it was not difficult to argue that a party that defined itself as Islamist should be banned for violating secularist principles as, by its nature, Islamist rule conflicted with secularism. But in its newest iteration as a party, AKP was crafting a different image altogether. The currency redesign was additional evidence of a progressive agenda that the public would remember when hearing secularist arguments in favor of a ban or coup.

The domestic audience proved even more important midway through the redesign process. Enthusiasm for EU membership died down in the second half of the decade for the Turkish populace as a whole (Pew 2008), as roadblocks were put in the way of Turkey's accession by several EU states (Captagay 2013). While loudly protesting such injustice, AKP executives officially continued to push for progress in the accession process (Akçapar 2007). However, membership looked increasingly unlikely and this stance likely represented another attempt to signal progressiveness rather than a legitimate hope for progress.

The likelihood of a military coup was greatly diminished in the aftermath of the Ergenekon trials, which controversially jailed key military officials on accusations of terrorism and treason (Saatçioğlu 2010). The marginalization of this threat could have reduced AKP's need to signal a progressive platform. However, the danger of a judicial ban on anti-secular grounds was still present. In 2008, AKP was put on trial by the judi-

ciary to determine whether the party had violated secularist principles, and narrowly escaped a ban by a single vote (Tait 2008a). Despite a consolidation of power, as late as 2008 AKP still needed to prove its progressive credentials. The following section will examine how they used iconography to do so.

The 2009 Redesign Examined

Front Side

A high regard for Atatürk has always been reflected on the Turkish banknotes, upon which he has nearly always been the most prominent feature since the beginning of the republic. Even on the few notes where there is no portrait, a gray wolf—the symbolic representation of the revered founder (Armstrong 1935)—is depicted instead. Upon Atatürk's death in 1938, the next Turkish president, İsmet İnönü, gradually replaced the founding father's image with his own over several issuances. During the first printing, the İnönü notes were half İnönü and half Atatürk; later printings replaced him completely. This was not necessarily a power play as the change was stipulated in the Turkish constitution—every new Turkish president was to have his face printed on the banknotes. But the gradual manner of the replacement is telling, almost as if the Turkish government could not quite let Atatürk go.

After İnönü's government lost power in 1950, the next prime minister, Adnan Menderes, changed the image back to that of Atatürk. This was a way for Menderes to borrow from the popularity of Atatürk in order to strengthen the legitimacy of his own government. There has been no change of the policy since then. The mere thought of it would seem borderline blasphemous.

In the 2009 redesign, Atatürk remains on the notes as the champion of the Turkish state. It seems that the Turkish banknote designers have continuously struggled to choose which portraits of Atatürk they like best—young, middle-aged, or elderly. Up until 2009, he had been variously depicted at all three ages. Indeed, the 2009 edition designers decided to eliminate the difficult choice between Atatürks by including a portrait of Atatürk at all three ages. On the 5 and 10 lira notes, we see Atatürk as a young revolutionary; on the 20 and 50 lira notes we see him in his middle years as president and reformer; and on the 100 and 200 lira notes, he is the elder statesman. In comparison to the rather stern expressions he wore in the past, the 2009 version of Atatürk seems more accommodating than fierce.

Back Side

It was not until 1981 that another recognizable historical figure besides İnönü or Atatürk was depicted on the lira. In that emission, the figures depicted included the writer of the Turkish national anthem and three Ottoman national heroes from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. While the use of images of human figures was unique for the lira, the message of nationalism was nothing new. The notes were commissioned after an unpopular military coup and may have been an attempt to

Figure 4: 2009 Emission: Front, all denominations



Figure 5: 1989 Emission: Stern Atatürk on the 50000 lira



recall the Turkish glory days and bolster the state's legitimacy. However, after the emission of these notes, the lira returned to depicting nonhuman figures for the next twenty-five years.

The 2009 redesign brought human figures back onto the lira. However, the people chosen communicate a different theme than the nationalist heroes of the 1980s notes. There is still the sense of Turkish nationalism, but now the feeling is much more modern, artistic, and progressive.

From the 5 lira to 200 lira notes, the occupations of the individuals depicted are as follows: scientist, mathematician, architect, novelist, musician, and poet (Bayir 2010). Symbols of their work are portrayed around their heads: DNA structures, computer code, architectural blueprints, books, and music notes. Besides Atatürk, there are now no longer any political or military figures on the lira—human or nonhuman.

Tellingly, the depicted individuals were pioneers in their field who advanced science or the arts but still retained their Islamic identity. Fatma Aliye was the

first female novelist in the Islamic world. The luxuriously mustachioed Ahmet Kemaleddin was the first architect to combine European Art Nouveau and Ottoman styles to create the architecture of the new republic. Aydin Sayili was one of the first prominent Islamic scientists in a culture that had often been unfriendly to the discipline.

The message communicated by the choices of these images is clear: Turkey was looking toward a future in which its people are at the forefront of scientific discovery and artistic style. The images feel very European and even Renaissance-like in their veneration of these goals. The union of Islamic values with progressive pursuits that these individuals represent is the exact identity that the light bulb-branded AKP wanted for itself.

Figure 6: 2009 Emission: Back, all denominations



The images were generally well-received by the Turkish public, though Kemalists protested some of the choices. The individuals chosen were considered by some to be obscure, with one politician claiming that 90 percent of the people in the street would not recognize the figures (Tait 2008b). Another Kemalist said, “I don’t trust the motives. . . . They will infiltrate through the currency names or images that at first look harmless but the next step will be to introduce gradually more conservative figures until you get people who negate the values of the republic” (Tait 2008b).

The choice of Aliye was especially criticized, as more prominent feminist figures in Turkish history had been passed over. This was probably not accidental. The most famous Turkish feminists were closely associated with secularism, while the lesser-known Aliye supported traditional family roles (Tait 2008). While the occupations of the individuals chosen by AKP were progressive, the party carefully picked people who had also been faithful Muslims. If this meant choosing less recognizable figures, so be it.

Conclusion

In this analysis, I find that Turkey has converged toward Western European iconography in its depiction of non-state individuals and postmaterialist themes. Because the government was seeking to gain approval of the international community for EU membership at the time, I do find some evidence for the influence of the “world society” on the iconographic choices (Hymans 2010). However, a closer look at the motivations of the ruling AKP party more strongly confirms the conclusion made by Helleiner, Cooper, and Unwin and Hewitt: The state is the ultimate determinants of iconography and makes changes in order to achieve its goals. AKP sought to signal its progressive intentions in its currency redesign. Adopting this strategy was necessary in the first years of the redesign process in order to ensure the party’s political survival, an outcome that was fundamentally more important to AKP than how it was perceived by the EU. It also allowed AKP to advance its vision for the Turkish nation and manipulate public opinion in its direction.

Currency iconography may be an insightful window through which we can understand the positioning of the government in power. Design changes can indicate how governments in other countries would like to be seen, how they define national identity and whom they hold as role models.

Some countries may have those questions largely settled. Turkey is not one of them. The battle to determine the answers is pivotal, as the direction that Turkey chooses will have significant consequences throughout the region. What AKP has done is stamp its vision of Turkish society onto something that is used by most of its citizens every day, and that stamp will remain in the foreseeable future. Changing currency design is a costly and lengthy process; without a crisis, it may be difficult for future governments to justify it. In a sense, AKP bought itself at least a decade’s worth of highly visible advertisements to promote its vision of what Turkey should be. That is a valuable win in a high stakes ideological battle.

Ironically, Erdogan may now be pushing the country in a different direction than the progressive Turkey the lira was redesigned to portray. Looking back, he may regret missing a golden opportunity to replace Atatürk’s face on the lira with his own.

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