

**THE MASK WARS AND SOCIAL CONTROL:
LESSONS FROM THE 1927 UNVEILING CAMPAIGN IN
SOVIET UZBEKISTAN**

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ABSTRACT

*For the past two years, mask wars have swept across the United States. This reflects the two-sided nature of the anti-COVID mask—it is a tool to fight a dreaded disease and the focus of a state-backed campaign of behavioral change (i.e., social control). To put the mask wars in perspective, this essay turns to an earlier social control campaign, the Soviet effort in the late 1920s to encourage women in Uzbekistan to unveil (the hujum). This paper looks at two perspectives on the hujum. The first, laid out in Douglas Northrop’s 2004 study *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia*, views the hujum as a failed attempt to impose Soviet values on an unwilling Uzbek population, a campaign that failed so spectacularly that the veil (paranji) became a symbol of Uzbek national resistance. Has the COVID mask, like the paranji, become a symbol of a failed state overreaching? Do the methods used by the Soviet state give us pause when considering our own campaigns for masking and vaccinations? By contrast, Marianne Kamp, in *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity and Communism* (2006) sees the hujum as a campaign against patriarchy.*

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Using oral histories and interviews, Kamp shows how Uzbek women were trapped between supporting the Soviets and following patriarchal veiling norms. While the paranji did not disappear, the hujum created a space where Uzbek women could choose to unveil. Have COVID masking campaigns stripped us of our agency? Would listening to people caught in the middle of the masking and vaccine campaigns lead to a better outcome? Taken together, the insights gleaned from Northrop and Kamp's accounts of the hujum help shift the debate over mask wearing away from face authoritarianism, in which the state determines how human subjects present themselves, toward face libertarianism, in which the human subject is, in most instances, free to decide whether or not to cover their face.

KEYWORDS: *Masks, COVID, Face Veils, Unveiling, Mask Mandates, Social Control, Gender, Colonialism, Soviet Uzbekistan, Human Agency.*

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I. THE HUJUM, COVID MASKS, AND FACE AUTHORITARIANISM

In 1927 the Soviet Union embarked on a campaign to encourage the women of Uzbekistan to unveil. The campaign, called the hujum (assault), began with mass meetings on International Women's Day during which attendees were encouraged, prodded, or cajoled into throwing off their paranjis—horsehair masks and veils worn by most Uzbek women, especially in urban areas.¹ A campaign of public edu-

1. For more on the hujum, see ADEEB KHALID, *MAKING UZBEKISTAN: NATION, EMPIRE, AND REVOLUTION IN THE EARLY USSR*, 354-61 (Cornell Univ. Press 2015); MARIANNE KAMP, *THE NEW WOMAN IN UZBEKISTAN: ISLAM, MODERNITY, AND UNVEILING UNDER COMMUNISM*, (Univ. of Wash. Press 2006); DOUGLAS

cation and informal pressure followed.² Female party members were encouraged to unveil; male party members were pressured to have their daughters and wives unveil.³ These efforts were partially successful at best; women who threw off their paranjis at a mass meeting would often put them back on afterwards.⁴

Re-veiling was often a direct result of a counter-campaign of insults, threats, and violent attacks directed at women who unveiled⁵ Despite prosecutions of some attackers, the passage of laws, the punishing of those who insulted an unveiled woman, and the use of anti-terror laws,⁶ at least 2,000 women were murdered between 1927 and 1929.⁷ While the active phase of the hujum ended in 1929, as the party shifted gears to focus on forced collectivization, the number of women unveiling slowly grew; by the 1950s most women in Uzbekistan did not wear a *paranji*.⁸ Soviet scholarship viewed the hujum as a success,⁹ and Uzbek authorities erected a statue of an unveiled woman in Tashkent to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the hujum.¹⁰

The hujum is fascinating but under appreciated. In personal studies of public debates over proposed hijab and burqa bans,¹¹ as well as

NORTHROP, *VEILED EMPIRE: GENDER & POWER IN STALINIST CENTRAL ASIA* (Cornell Univ. Press 2004).

2. See generally *id.*

3. NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, at 219-22 (describing informal pressure on party members).

4. *Id.* at 12-13 (viewing the hujum as a failure).

5. See KAMP, *supra* note 2, at 186-214 (describing the counter-hujum).

6. *Id.* at 211-12 (describing use of Article 64 of the Uzbek criminal code to punish murder and other serious attacks on unveiled women as terrorist acts).

7. KAMP, *supra* note 2, at 186.

8. *Id.* at 220 (noting that in the 1930s, as party interest in the hujum waned, unveiling continued, largely driven by collectivization, so that by 1940 “the paranji had become a heavily discouraged choice adopted by a few women”).

9. See KAMP, *supra* note 2, at 227 (describing the tendency of Soviet historians to “portray a rosy situation where women were liberated, and except for a few ‘relics of the past’ were fulfilling the promises of modernity and living in equality with men”). Northrop, for his part, notes that the people he met in Tashkent during his dissertation research “almost universally spoke warmly of the hujum, pointing to it as a positive mark of Soviet success.” NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, at 352-53.

10. NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, at 353 n.10.

11. See, e.g., Robert A. Kahn, *Are Muslims the New Catholics? Europe’s Headscarf Laws in Comparative Historical Perspective*, 21 DUKE J. COMP. & INT’L.

in studies of mask bans and mandates in the United States,¹² rarely has the hujum come up.¹³

The lack of attention to the hujum in debates over hijabs, burqas, and masks is surprising, especially given the Stalinist provenance of the hujum.¹⁴ Yet in the 2010s, as country after country in Europe enacted laws banning the burqa, there was little if any mention of the hujum.¹⁵ Nor was the hujum—a society wide effort to ban a specific face covering—mentioned in discussions of mask bans and mandates in the United States. This is unfortunate given that the hujum offers some lessons for understanding the conflicting way the campaign for mask-
ing unfolded in the United States.¹⁶

L. 567 (2011) [hereinafter Kahn, *Are Muslims the New Catholics?*] (criticizing burqa bans); Robert A. Kahn, *The Headscarf as Threat: A Comparison of German and American Legal Discourses*, 40 VAND. J. TRANSNAT'L L. 417 (2007) [hereinafter Kahn, *The Headscarf as Threat*] (criticizing restrictions on wearing of hijab).

12. See, e.g., Rob Kahn, *Masks, Culture Wars, and Public Health Expertise: Confessions of a Mask "Expert,"* 17 UNIV. OF ST. THOMAS L.J. 900, 909-14 (2022) [hereinafter Kahn, *Masks, Culture Wars, and Public Health Expertise*] (describing development of the COVID mask as a symbol); Rob Kahn, "My Face, My Choice?" – Mask Mandates, Bans, and Burqas in the COVID Age, 14 N.Y.U. J. OF L. & LIBERTY, 651 (2021) [hereinafter Kahn, "My Face, My Choice?"] (describing mask mandates, mask bans, and bans on face veils).

13. KHALID, *supra* note 2, at 354-61. I only learned about it while reading this wonderful book by Adeeb Khalid's, as part of a broader interest in Central Asian history, where he described the basic details.

14. ROBERT A. KAHN, HOLOCAUST DENIAL AND THE LAW: A COMPARATIVE STUDY, 105 (Palgrave 2004) (describing conservative hecklers who interrupted a speech of Communist Party member François Asensi with shouts of "Goulag" and "Katyn").

15. These laws followed the 2014 European Court of Human Rights ruling *SAS v. France*, which justified face veil bans on the theory that showing one's face is part of what it means to live together in a modern society. *SAS v. France*, App. No. 43835/11, ¶ 142 (July 1, 2014), <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-145466>. For more, see Kahn, "My Face, My Choice?," *supra* note 13, at 675-84; Eva Brems, Yaiza Janssens, Kim Lecoyer, Saila Oulad Chaib, Victoria Vandersteen and Jochum Vrieling, *The Belgian "Burqa Ban" confronted with insider realities* in THE EXPERIENCES OF FACE VEIL WEARERS IN EUROPE AND THE LAW 77-114 (Eva Brems ed., Cambridge Univ. Press 2014) (describing concerns about gender equality); Annelies Moors, *The Dutch and the face-veil: The politics of discomfort*, 17 SOC. ANTHROPOLOGY 393, 401-03.

16. See Kahn, *Masks, Culture Wars, and Public Health Expertise, supra* note 13, at 909-14.

Face authoritarianism, meaning the effort of the state (or social groups) to compel individuals to reveal or hide their faces, is what connects the hujum to our current mask wars. These efforts, manifested in laws or informal pressure, stand against the baseline position that a person in society ought to choose how to present their face.¹⁷ Some societies do not focus on the human face¹⁸ and some have a greater acceptance of masking and concealment.¹⁹ Nonetheless, face authoritarianism is common in modern societies because of the meaning attached to the human face as a symbol of human sincerity,²⁰ the visibility of the face, and the garments (burqas, Ku Klux Klan masks, and COVID surgical masks) that might potentially adorn the face.²¹

Critically, the face authoritarianism concept covers bans and mandates. This reflects the reality that while showing one's face may be

17. In other words, face libertarianism. This is the position I have taken in previously published work. See Kahn, "My Face, My Choice?," *supra* note 13, at 708 (prioritizing individual choice); Rob Kahn, *COVID Masks as Semiotic Expressions of Hate*, 35 INT'L J. OF SEMIOTICS & L. 2392, 2405 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11196-022-09885-7> (calling for a freedom loving approach to questions of masking).

18. See Donald Pollock, *Masks and the Semiotics of Identity*, 1 J. OF THE ROYAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL INST. 581, 590 (1995) (describing societies that emphasize hearing rather than sight as the focus of identity).

19. For instance, East Asian societies are often noted for having a greater acceptance of masking. See Mitsutoshi Horii, *Why Do the Japanese Wear Masks?*, 14 ELEC. J. OF CONTEMP. JAPANESE STUD., no. 2, July 2014, at 1, (noting Japanese masking culture); Massimo Leone, *The semiotics of the medical face mask: East and West*, 1 SIGNS & MEDIA 40, 47-8 (2020) (describing his experiences with Japan's masking culture during a 2016 visit to Kyoto). On the other hand, masking is not unknown in the West. See James H. Johnson, *Versailles, Meet Les Halles: Masks, Carnival, and the French Revolution*, 73 REPRESENTATIONS 89-91 (2001) (describing the role of mask wearing in prerevolutionary France).

20. The connection between the human face and sincerity dates to the French Revolution where showing one's face was a way of proving that one was not an aristocrat in disguise. See Johnson, *supra* note 20, at 96-99 (describing efforts of aristocrats to blend into the crowd, and growing paranoia that disguises that led to a demand to unveil every face).

21. I have discussed these issues in previous work. See Rob Kahn, *The Long Road Back to Skokie: Returning the First Amendment to Mask Wearers*, 28 BROOK. J. L. & SOC. POL'Y, 71, 97-104 (2019) (describing passage of mask bans targeting the Klan); Kahn, "My Face, My Choice," *supra* note 13, at 675-84 (describing impetus behind burqa bans); Kahn, *COVID Masks as Semiotic Expressions of Hate*, *supra* note 18, (discussing hostility toward COVID masks).

experienced as liberation, and mask wearing as stifling, this is not always the case. One advantage of masking, noted in studies of Japan, is the way the mask frees the wearer of the necessity to constantly show emotion.²² Behind a mask, one can smile or frown.²³ The COVID mask can also give the wearer a sense of comfort, both by minimizing risk of infection, as well as by sending the message that the wearer cares about other people.²⁴ At the same time, showing one's face has its risks. It can expose the wearer to closed circuit television, handheld cell phone cameras, and other features of our modern-day privacy intrusive culture.²⁵

From the perspective of face authoritarianism, the issue is not whether the state (or society) is telling you to put on or take off a mask, burqa or veil. The issue is whether the state, society, or some other force wielding power is cutting into the underlying choice of adults to decide how they present themselves in public. In this regard, the hujum and the COVID mask mandate campaign pose similar questions. First, what means should society use to enforce its mask wearing goals? Will it be achieved by legal fiat, informal pressure, or some combination of the two? Second, what does compliance look like under the campaign? Outward acceptance, or loyalty to the new way of thinking? If someone must wear a COVID mask, must they like it? Finally, how should society measure success? Is the goal "universal" compliance—every Uzbek woman unveils or every American wears a mask when out in public? Or is some lesser degree of compliance sufficient?

In exploring these questions, the hujum offers two sets of lessons that help unpack the mask wars in the United States. The first lesson, one that might resonate more strongly among mask opponents, is about social control. From the start of the pandemic, one of the prima-

22. Kahn, "My Face, My Choice," *supra* note 13, at 663 (describing Japanese masking customs).

23. *Id.*

24. Leone, *supra* note 20, at 59 (noting that medical face masks not only protect they also send that "I am a responsible worker").

25. See Kahn, *supra* note 22, at 134-40 (describing how a lack of masking raises privacy concerns); Rob Kahn, *Masks, Face Veil Bans and "Living Together" – What's Privacy Got to Do with It?*, 6 PUB. GOVERNANCE, ADMIN. AND FIN. L. REV. 7 (2021) (exploring the links between privacy policies and mask wearing norms).

ry objections to wearing masks during COVID was that it was imposed upon individuals, rather than a choice by each individual, and therefore, a symbol of broader efforts at social control.²⁶ From the anti-mask perspective, supporters of the mask mandates were doing the same sort of thing supporters of the hujum attempted in 1927—they sought to regulate the face from above.

In thinking about this, Douglas Northrop's detailed monograph on the hujum, *Veiled Empire: Gender & Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (2004), is especially insightful. Northrop argues that Soviet elites tried to consolidate their power in Uzbekistan by targeting the paranji—a symbol the elites already marked as backward and un-Soviet.²⁷ This backfired. Instead, the paranji became a symbol of Uzbek national consciousness; the large number of unveiled women stood as proof of the Soviet state's lack of power.²⁸ While Northrop is most interested in what this says about the strength of the Soviet state as Stalin was consolidating power,²⁹ the significance of Northrop's interpretation of the hujum for the mask wars in the United States is clear: just as the paranji became a symbol of state power and Soviet rule, the surgical anti-COVID mask became a symbol of blue America's attempt to tell red America what to do.³⁰

The second set of lessons from the hujum is for mask mandate supporters. Historians argue over whether the hujum worked.³¹ Northrop, viewing the hujum as a counter-productive power grab from the imperial center, saw the hujum as a failure.³² Most women did not unveil; those who did, put the paranji back on, at least while they

26. Molly McCann, *Mandatory Masks Aren't About Safety, They're About Social Control*, FEDERALIST (May 27, 2020), <https://thefederalist.com/2020/05/27/mandatory-masks-arent-about-safety-theyre-about-social-control/>.

27. NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, at 46-66 (describing the pre-hujum treatment of paranji).

28. *Id.* at 13-14 (describing the hujum as counterproductive).

29. *Id.* at 26 (arguing that the hujum demonstrated the weakness of the Soviet state).

30. See Ritu Prasad, *Coronavirus: Why is there a US backlash to masks?*, BBC NEWS (May 5, 2020), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52540015>.

31. See KHALID, *supra* note 2, at 361-62; NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, at 97.

32. NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, at 97 (describing the hujum as a failure).

walked down the street.³³ Northrop's reading of the hujum echoes the sense that, during the early stages of the COVID pandemic, masking was failing because rural people would not comply with masking requirements.³⁴ While red anti-maskers celebrated this as a triumph for liberty, over-eager public health professionals viewed this as a sign of failure.³⁵

By contrast, Marianne Kamp's *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism* (2006), based on the experience of women activists who campaigned for unveiling, takes a more positive view of the hujum.³⁶ Kamp sees the hujum as an inter-Uzbek campaign against patriarchy, in which activists enlisted the support of the Soviet state.³⁷ Kamp concedes that the hujum was not entirely successful, partly due to the power of patriarchy in 1920s Uzbekistan and a coordinated terror campaign in defense of patriarchy (comparable to the use of lynching in the Jim Crow South to defend white supremacy).³⁸

For Kamp, however, the hujum was never about universal unveiling. Rather, it encouraged a safe space for women who wanted to unveil to do so.³⁹ Kamp's voluntaristic approach gave her a different perspective on success. The hujum gave Uzbek women the opportunity to unveil, an opportunity that some women took. For that reason, Kamp has a more positive view of situational unveiling than Northrop does. A woman who casts off the paranji at work but puts it on when walking home, is making a choice. Her decision to wear her veil again

33. Northrop argues that a woman who puts on the paranji to avoid assault has been "socialized into the norms and values of local society[.]" *Id.* In taking this position, he ignores the willingness of the women to remove their paranjis in the first place.

34. Prasad, *supra* note 31 (describing the opposition to masking in rural Oklahoma).

35. *Id.* (describing the debate over the failure of universal masking in the United States).

36. KAMP, *supra* note 2, at 14-17.

37. *Id.* at 180 (describing the unveiling campaign "as mainly concerned with the veil as a symbol of patriarchal oppression and women's seclusion").

38. *Id.* at 201-02.

39. *Id.* at 180 (describing how unveiling would "free women to enter the public realm, to become educated, and to work").

is not a failure of the hujum, especially if a major reason women put the paranji back on was to avoid threats and violence.⁴⁰

COVID masking can be viewed in a similar way. If the goal is compliance, mask supporters will be disappointed. In a public health emergency like COVID, mask wearing is critical, but not all mask wearing is equal. Going without a mask on public transportation or in a crowded store is different from not wearing a mask while walking across an open field.⁴¹ One way to avoid some of the failures is to develop narrow mask mandates that would, for example, allow being mask-free when outdoors. But even with narrow mask mandates, some failures are inevitable. The debate between Northrop and Kamp turns on how to assess these failures.

The rest of this article builds on the lessons gleaned from Northrop and Kamp's divergent accounts of the hujum. Northrop's account raises the possibility that our anti-COVID campaigns have an element of counterproductive overreach—just as in the hujum. Kamp's account shows how focusing on the people who must mask or be vaccinated as human subjects—rather than as targets—can lead to a more nuanced, hopeful assessment of our masking and vaccination campaigns.

However, three caveats should be noted. First, comparing the mask wars to the hujum might seem like a stretch. After all, the Soviet Union was a totalitarian state, something the United States is not. Despite this, the situation in Uzbekistan in the late 1920s was fairly fluid, the high point of Stalinist terror had yet to be reached.⁴² The difficulties a one-party dictatorship had in trying to influence social policy highlights the challenges involved when a liberal-democratic state tries to regulate how someone should present their face to the public.

40. *Id.* at 213 (describing the “re-veiling” as a “pragmatic self-preservation rather than . . . political or religious opposition to Soviet policies”). To be sure, re-veiling in response to threats and violence might make the hujum a practical failure since the state was unable to protect unveiled women. But it was not an ideological failure. However, Northrop describes the same examples of situational re-veiling as proof that Uzbek women were “masters of *seeming* to cooperate.” NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, at 192 (emphasis in original).

41. Kahn, *Masks, Culture Wars and Public Health Expertise*, *supra* note 13, at 913 (describing an example of a hiker shamed for going without a mask on a lightly used hiking trail).

42. NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, at 314-15 (highlighting the shift away from the more open New Economic Policy as the 1920s progressed).

Second, the hujum only applied to half the Uzbek population. Uzbek women were told to abandon the paranji; men had no similar requirement imposed on them. In this regard, a better frame of analysis might be Kemalist Turkey where men were required to abandon the fez.⁴³ Some distinctive challenges posed by the hujum on the interaction between party demands to unveil and the pressures of a patriarchal society to put the veils back on—something that depends on the gendered nature of the hujum. While there is no direct equivalent to this dual pressure in the campaign to encourage wearing masks, there are broad comparisons about the nature of social control worth making.⁴⁴ Critically, both the hujum and the COVID mask pose questions of how to ensure mass compliance with a campaign that regulates how individuals present themselves in public.

Finally, the COVID mask requirement was a response to an urgent medical need; it was temporary. Masking, in theory, could be dispensed with as soon as the acute phase of the pandemic subsided. The hujum was a deliberate effort, not triggered by a crisis, to encourage long term systemic change. The Soviet planners of the hujum had the luxury of time, something the strained public health authorities did not have in March and April 2020. The theoretically short-term nature of the pandemic made the masking campaign less ominous—the hiding of the human face would be brief. The different settings created different challenges. However, there are overlaps between the hujum and masking campaigns that are worth exploring.

43. See KAMP, *supra* note 2, at 179 (noting that Atatürk encouraged female unveiling but imposed an outright ban on the fez). Although Kamp does not say much about the fez in her book, she does compare the hujum to similar unveiling campaigns in Iran and Turkey. She believes that the coercive role of the Soviet state helped to explain the murder wave against unveiling women. *Id.* at 10.

44. Certainly, some anti-maskers saw the larger connection behind mask and veil rules by deriding the medical face mask as a “COVID burqa.” Sebastian Gorka, aide to former President Trump, used the phrase in a radio talk show in June 2020. Khan, “*My Face, My Choice?*”, *supra* note 13, at 697-98. The term suggests both the gendering and Islamophobic othering of surgical anti-COVID masks. For more, see *id.* at 698-700 (viewing the COVID burqa moment as a lost possibility for the libertarian right to make common cause with burqa wearers).

II. THE HUJUM AS SOVIET OVERREACH—DOUGLAS NORTHROP'S
VEILED EMPIRE

Douglas Northrop bases his account of the hujum on party archives, secret police files, and documents he read “against the grain” to argue that as the paranjis became a symbol of resistance to Soviet policy, the hujum led to an anti-Soviet backlash.⁴⁵ Some of Northrop’s arguments about the hujum fit well with red state fears about masking. Just as Molly McCann suggested that masks were the first step in a campaign of social control,⁴⁶ Northrop argues that the Soviet authorities only settled on the hujum after trying a series of other initiatives.⁴⁷

Additionally, Northrop shows how Soviet authorities cast the paranji as dirty, backwards, and generally unhealthy. The paranji caused “muscular weakness, flabby skin, and premature aging,”⁴⁸ which stripped Uzbek women of any human dignity.⁴⁹ A party anthropologist sent to study the “essential” Uzbek woman produced a report using naked photographs of six Uzbek women.⁵⁰ This has some parallels to the tone-deaf way public health campaigns are sometimes conducted in the United States. Consider the body shaming that accompanies the war on obesity: to regulate weight, many states gave students their body mass index in class with little concern about how this would lead to shaming.⁵¹ As with the hujum, this type of state overreach undermines the legitimacy of public health authorities and “primes the pump” for resistance to public health initiatives.

Another notable aspect of Northrop’s account is his description of the informal methods Soviet authorities used to enforce compliance with the hujum.⁵² In Soviet society, party membership was likely the

45. NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, at 368-69 (describing his method of reading sources).

46. See McCann, *supra* note 27.

47. NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, at 72-76 (describing campaigns about language, against religious superstition and for land reform).

48. *Id.* at 63.

49. *Id.*

50. *Id.* at 53-55.

51. See Kahn, *Masks, Culture Wars, and Public Health Expertise*, *supra* note 13, at 911-12 (describing the role of body shaming in the public health campaign against obesity).

52. NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, at 219-22.

key to personal and family success. Thus, an easy way to encourage unveiling was to threaten party members with expulsion. During 1928 and 1929, as progress on the hujum was stagnating, the authorities unleashed the proverka (verification) campaign.⁵³

The proverka was a classic illustration of leadership by example. If party members unveil, or have their wives and daughters unveil, other women will be encouraged to follow suit.⁵⁴ The proverka, however, turns this innocent idea into something quite coercive. As Northrop puts it:

[N]ow more than ever, [party members] must be examples to their friends, relatives, and neighbors in matters of women's liberation. Failure to do so would reveal them as class-alien elements, criminal, corrupt, and immoral; as supporters of class enemies now locked into a hidden struggle against Soviet power, and thus deserving of expulsion from party ranks.⁵⁵

At this point, one might object that there is no equivalent to the proverka in the mask wars. Mask supporters and public health authorities may encourage or mandate mask wearing. But whether there are purges or guilt by association due to masking requirements is another question. When a public health issue is urgent—as masking was before vaccines and during the Omicron surge—the habits of politicians, entertainers, athletes, and social media influencers may be a cause for concern.

For example, Donald Trump was roundly criticized for his failure to wear a mask during the early stages of the pandemic, in large part because his example might encourage others not to mask.⁵⁶ Brooklyn Nets basketball player Kyrie Irving took heat for his anti-vaccine stance, in part because of his popularity.⁵⁷ On one level, the criticism

53. *Id.* at 219 (describing proverka).

54. *Id.* at 233.

55. *Id.* at 219.

56. Kahn, *Masks, Culture Wars and Public Health Expertise*, *supra* note 13, at 908 (describing President Trump's early resistance to masking).

57. Irving's refusal to get vaccinated also upset fans because, as a result of his unvaccinated status, he was unable to play in the Nets' home games—a situation that has changed now that New York City created a new exemption to its vaccine mandate for “city-based” entertainers. See Jason Hanna, et al., *NYC Expanding Vaccine Exemption to City-Based Entertainers, Clearing Kyrie Irving and Unvaccinated Yankees and*

of Kyrie makes sense—he is a popular athlete and a role model.⁵⁸ On the other hand, after the Minnesota Vikings’ dismal 2021 season, few people in the Twin Cities metro area would be convinced by Vikings quarterback Kirk Cousins, who is also unvaccinated, to do anything.⁵⁹ But should mask and vaccine policies depend on one’s ability to serve as a role model?

The focus on role modeling raises an important point about why we encourage masking and vaccination against COVID. If the blue surgical mask is simply a tool to prevent the spread of disease—rather than a sign of the wearer’s selflessness—is it productive to judge athletes, entertainers, and other high-status individuals for the example they set for others? More generally, should we care about what people think more than about what they do? Certainly, setting an example takes a more ominous cast in a totalitarian state, and role modeling likely has a hand in encouraging compliance. But given the proverb, and its potential for abuse, the demand for role models should be balanced against the harm to the individual when virtue signaling becomes an end in itself.⁶⁰

The themes of role modeling and leadership by example also came up in Northrop’s discussion of the Uzbek Communist Party’s surprising 1929 decision not to ban the paranji.⁶¹ Northrop describes the extensive debate over the proposed paranji ban as “remarkably flexi-

Mets to Play at Home, CNN (Mar. 24, 2022, 2:41 PM), <https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/24/sport/kyrie-irving-new-york-vaccine-mandate/index.html>.

58. See Jay Caspian Kang, *Should You Care About Unvaccinated NBA Players?*, NEW YORK TIMES (Oct. 4, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/04/opinion/unvaccinated-nba-players.html> (noting those who faulted Irving for missing an opportunity to encourage vaccination in the African American and Native American communities—Irving is part Sioux).

59. See Chris Korman, *Kirk Cousins Failed His Teammates and Vikings Fans by Not Getting Vaccinated*, USA TODAY (Dec. 31, 2021, 2:51 PM), <https://ftw.usatoday.com/2021/12/kirk-cousins-failed-his-teammates-and-vikings-fans-by-not-getting-vaccinated> (suggesting the Vikings should move on from Cousins because of his poor performances).

60. For instance, does it matter if a famous person—like former President Trump—is maskless in an empty TV studio where his face is visible to the nation but not likely to infect anyone? See Kahn, *Masks, Culture Wars, and Public Health Expertise*, *supra* note 13, at 908.

61. NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, at 284-313 (describing efforts to ban the paranji in 1929, 1936, and 1940; however, the latter two efforts garnered less public attention).

ble.”⁶² Indeed, from a non-expert point of view on Northrop’s account of the debate, it is hard to imagine he is describing the Soviet Union.⁶³

In particular, the opponents of the paranji ban emphasized the power of moral suasion as opposed to law.⁶⁴ For example, Northrop paraphrases the argument of one ban opponent as follows: “By focusing on the act of unveiling, the party was requiring a visible act of individual will to show a [shift] in a woman’s personal level and political loyalties. But could such an internal shift in consciousness be coerced, forced, or brought about by fiat?”⁶⁵ Northrop also acknowledges another opponent who complained that forced unveiling was the easy way out.⁶⁶ He stated that a law could ban the paranji, but what was really needed was “the hard work of cultural change, education, and leadership by personal example.”⁶⁷

The use of “leadership by personal example” is interesting in several respects. As with the proverka, “leadership by personal example,” is not necessarily benign. One can say the same thing about personal leadership in the public health campaigns for masking and vaccination. In both instances, coercive pressure is placed on someone who, because of their social status, must act as a role model. At the same time, leadership by example is an alternative to formal legal bans.⁶⁸

Equally important to the debate over COVID masking was a second reason the Soviet authorities did not ban the paranjis: they did not believe they could enforce it.⁶⁹ For Antonia Nukhrat, an opponent of

62. *Id.* at 286.

63. In what follows, the focus is on the arguments of ban opponents. Northrop also described the arguments of ban supporters. *Id.* at 292-93. The supporters’ arguments are discussed in the next section, focusing on Kamp, who describes these views in more detail. *See* KAMP, *supra* note 2, at 208-10.

64. NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, at 289-95.

65. *Id.* at 289.

66. *Id.* at 295.

67. *Id.*

68. At the same time, the failure of the party to ban the paranji raises the question of why the Soviet Union, a totalitarian entity against which Europe defines itself, was able to promote its modernization campaign without a formal legal ban, while European states felt the need to legislate “ban the burqa” (a garment worn by a miniscule number of people). *See* Kahn, “*My Face, My Choice?*,” *supra* note 13, at 675-76, 675 n.123 (noting the small number of burqa wearers in Europe).

69. NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, at 294 (raising concerns about the enforceability of a paranji ban).

the ban, one could not “pass a law against the will of the overwhelming majority of the laboring population,” especially one that touched on vital interests.⁷⁰ A failure to enforce a ban would leave the hujum in even worse shape, and expose the weakness of the party’s position in Uzbekistan.⁷¹

The same is true of mask mandates. In the weeks after the pandemic, many cities passed rules about masking.⁷² These early laws often went beyond masking to specify how to properly dispose of a mask, and imposed a fine for those who did so improperly.⁷³ These were soon supplemented state mask mandates that, while requiring masking in most indoor situations, did not require masking outdoors unless social distancing was impossible.⁷⁴ While vague, this language provided an “out” for police officers enforcing the law. This solution appears to be a reasonable compromise, especially given the difficulty any police force would have in enforcing mask mandates against all violators.⁷⁵

While *Veiled Empire*’s depiction of Soviet overreach has much to tell us about the mask wars, Northrop himself overreaches. First, his

70. *Id.*

71. *Id.*

72. Kahn, *Masks, Culture Wars, and Public Health Expertise*, *supra* note 13, at 917-19 (describing early state and local mask mandates).

73. *Id.* at 918. See also Ainslie Cromar, *These are the Mass. Towns Currently Mandating Face Coverings in Public*, BOSTON (Apr. 30, 2020), <https://www.boston.com/news/coronavirus/2020/04/30/these-are-the-mass-towns-are-currently-mandating-masks-in-public>. For example, the April 2020 Plymouth, Massachusetts statute that not only required masking but punished failure to properly dispose of masks, gloves, and other contaminated items “in appropriate storage bins” with a \$300 fine. *Id.*

74. Minnesota’s law does this, for example. See Kahn, *Masks, Culture Wars, and Public Health Expertise*, *supra* note 13, at 918.

75. If 10% of a metro area of three million people do not mask in public indoor spaces (the flip side of a 90% mask compliance rate), this leaves 300,000 law violators for a police force to stop, ticket, and possibly arrest. One possible result would be for the police to target communities of color that traditionally receive extra policing. See Kahn, “*My Face, My Choice*”, *supra* note 13, at 684-88 (discussing discriminatory enforcement of mask mandates); Caroline V. Lawrence & the COVID-Dynamic Team, *Masking Up: A COVID-19 Face-off Between Anti-Mask Laws and Mandatory Mask Orders for Black Americans*, 11 CALIF. L. REV. 480, 482 (2020).

strained interpretation of the hujum as an anti-colonial struggle⁷⁶ parallels how the mask wars have been folded into the preexisting narrative of culture war between blue and red America.⁷⁷ Second, in presenting the Uzbek hujum opponents as the underdogs, despite instances of violence against unmasked women, Northrop raises ethical questions about the nature of “resistance” that are relevant for the mask wars.⁷⁸

Let’s start with Northrop’s characterization of the resistance to the hujum as “nationalist” or anti-Soviet.⁷⁹ Northrop wants to compare the hujum to similar anti-imperial struggles in the colonial world, such as in India.⁸⁰ Northrop is certainly right that the hujum engendered a political reaction, but much of this was expressed in religious, rather than nationalist terms. As the examples in Northrop’s own book show, unveiling was derided as un-Islamic, proof that Islam had fallen into a decadence associated with Soviet rule.⁸¹ Meanwhile, the hujum opponents Northrop quotes rarely speak of an Uzbek national identity.

The one major exception to this proves the rule. A sample party report included as an appendix, at the end of Northrop’s book, contains a single paragraph in which the writer lays out nationalist objections to the hujum.⁸² The author notes that, in some localities, wealthy elites and clergy argue that “unveiled women lose their nationality along with the

76. NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, at 368-69. Here, Northrop argues that “the sentiments, language, and categories of colonial authorities and elites . . . are partially shaped by the actions and will of colonized subjects.” *Id.*

77. Kahn, *Masks, Culture Wars, and Public Health Expertise*, *supra* note 13, at 909-10.

78. The questions are most clearly raised when Northrop discusses resistance. See NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, at 176-77.

79. *Id.* at 22 (describing how the hujum created a “distinctly non-Soviet Uzbek identity”).

80. *Id.* at 23-24.

81. For example, Northrop quotes a woman opposing the paranji by claiming that the “Russians want to convert us to the Orthodox faith to take us into the army and to turn us into prostitutes . . .” *Id.* at 187. This language would seem to support his thesis. But the speaker then admonished her audience: “Don’t take off your paranji, lest you become idolaters and after your death descend into hell.” *Id.* The latter language is clearly religious and a serious impediment to Northrop’s one-dimensional colonial revolt explanation for the hujum.

82. Report on the Women’s Movement in Uzbekistan (1928), *reprinted in* NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, 359-64.

paranji” and that “the Uzbek nation, in comparison with others, is small” and needs protection.⁸³ Oddly, Northrop does not mention this example in his main text. In the report, the party official notes other objections to the hujum, including the argument that unveiling will turn women into prostitutes and lead women to leave their husbands.⁸⁴ Instead, Northrop uses language that appears to undermine his nationalist thesis. For example, he describes how most Uzbeks assimilated the hujum into a preexisting worldview by stating it was “less [] an emancipatory campaign by a modernizing government than as a storm or plague sent by Allah to test or punish Muslim believers.”⁸⁵

Northrop’s summary shows how social engineers and the subjects they operate on view campaigns of behavior change differently.⁸⁶ But the language Northrop uses—“a plague sent by Allah”—is about religious belief, not national belonging. Perhaps Northrop is simply a little loose with his terminology, similar to the way Deborah Lipstadt used “racism and anti-Semitism” as a singular compound noun, even though the two ideas represent different concepts.⁸⁷ In other words, Northrop likely sees the religious and nationalist opposition to the hujum as two sides of the same coin, an understandable position given the Soviet support for atheism in the 1920s.⁸⁸

At the same time, words have meaning, and Northrop’s conceptual gliding parallels how the mask wars have been folded into the red

83. *Id.*

84. *Id.*

85. *Id.* at 165.

86. In a LinkedIn post responding to charges that the British government had employed “scare tactics” to encourage COVID compliance, behavioral scientist Steven Johnson described behavioral interventions as efforts that should be designed *with* the people they are intended to influence, rather than *for* those people or *to* those people. “I’ve been discussing and defending the ethics of behavior change for over two decades. Yes, it’s a minefield” Steven Johnson, LINKEDIN (Feb. 3, 2022, 12:17 PM), <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/activity:6894666535877558272>.

87. DEBORAH LIPSTADT, DENYING THE HOLOCAUST: THE GROWING ASSAULT ON TRUTH AND MEMORY (Free Press 1993). Lipstadt speaks repeatedly of the “racist and anti-Semitic” agenda of deniers. While this is true in many instances, anti-Semitism can be seen as a form of racism even though the two concepts have separate meanings.

88. KHALID, *supra* note 2, at 345-48 (describing the Soviet shift in the late 1920s away from strategic alliances with progressive clergy to imposing atheism from above).

versus blue paradigm. The paradigm increasingly used to describe every conceivable development in American politics.⁸⁹ For example, a liberal democrat is likely to mask while a conservative, pro-Trump republican likely views masking as an example of social control.⁹⁰ This paradigm, however, has no place for someone who does not like masks because they have asthma, or need to read lips. Nor is there a place for a supporter of Donald Trump, and conservative ideals who nevertheless thinks that masking (or COVID vaccinations) is a serious business. The attempt to divide every issue into two neat categories gets in the way of understanding and compromise.

The second issue with Northrop's account is how he seemingly valorizes resistance to the hujum.⁹¹ Northrop invokes anthropologist James Scott's concept of "weapons of the weak," the idea that "peasants and colonized people facing radically unequal power imbalances" use a variety of tactics, including "rumors, gossip, folktales, songs, gestures and jokes."⁹² These tactics create a "theatre of the powerless" that can be used to critique the powerful while appearing to engage in innocent activities.⁹³ To that end, hujum opponents found "many creative solutions to the problem of how to oppose a state that in extremis could always rely on an army to enforce its version of law and order."⁹⁴

On one level, this makes sense. Indeed, the reference to gossip, songs, and folktales is an apt way to describe the anti-mask and anti-vaccine movements during the COVID age.⁹⁵ But Northrop's embrace of the "weapons of the weak" seems to also encompass violence. Just a few pages before he celebrates Uzbek resistance as "theatre of the powerless," Northrop recounts an Uzbek man announcing that his village would kill a male representative sent to the village to promote

89. See Kahn, *Masks, Culture Wars, and Public Health Expertise*, *supra* note 13, at 910 n.73 (noting that the culture wars frame can be overstated).

90. *Id.* at 910.

91. NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, at 176-77.

92. *Id.* at 176; see JAMES C. SCOTT, *DOMINATION AND THE ARTS OF RESISTANCE: HIDDEN TRANSCRIPTS* (New Haven 1990).

93. NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, at 176.

94. *Id.* at 177.

95. See, e.g., Barbie Latza Nadeau, *Anti-Vax Folk Singer Got COVID on Purpose. Now She's Dead*, THE DAILY BEAST (Jan. 19, 2022, 6:10 PM), <https://www.the-dailybeast.com/czech-folk-singer-hana-horka-got-covid-19-on-purposenow-shes-dead>.

unveiling and rape a female representative.⁹⁶ While Northrop does not defend these acts,⁹⁷ his description of the resistance to the hujum stands in sharp contrast to Marianne Kamp's depiction of the threats, rapes, and violence against women as the Uzbek equivalent of lynching.⁹⁸ Sometimes the "weapons of the weak" are actually weapons.⁹⁹

At the same time, the debate between Northrop and Kamp over the meaning of anti-hujum violence has some relevance to the mask and vaccine wars. Over the past two years, opponents of masks, vaccines, and lockdowns have engaged in a variety of resistance activities.¹⁰⁰ These acts range from jokes questioning COVID and masking,¹⁰¹ a spread of disinformation about COVID,¹⁰² to attacks on mask wearers,¹⁰³ mass protests outside the homes of public health offi-

96. NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, at 170-71.

97. Indeed, earlier in the book Northrop concedes that "it can be dangerous (if not morally suspect) to valorize the mistreatment of women as simple resistance to a colonial or Stalinist state . . ." *Id.* at 87. It is unclear if Northrop was talking about the violence triggered by the hujum, or patriarchal violence in general. In any event, Northrop follows this concession with a warning that it is "equally dangerous" to impose a "foreign notion of liberation" on the Central Asian context. Adding that while some Uzbek women supported the hujum enthusiastically, "it would be patronizing and incomplete to say that theirs is the only legitimate female response." *Id.* at 87-88.

98. KAMP, *supra* note 2, at 201-02.

99. Here, Northrop raises Frantz Fanon's argument that in Algeria the veil became a locus of resistance because it was something the French authorities were willing to fight over. *Id.* at 185 (citing FRANTZ FANON, *A DYING COLONIALISM* (Haakon Chevalier trans., 1959)). But the fight over veiling was a chapter in the Algerian War; undoubtedly an anti-colonial struggle. The veil was one front in that larger war. By contrast, the hujum—read at face value—centered on the veil, was a symbol of patriarchy. Nor does the invocation of Fanon bring us any closer to discerning where heroic, praiseworthy anti-Soviet "resistance" turns into patriarchal violence.

100. See *infra* notes 133-43 and accompanying text.

101. Aaron B. Rochlen, *The Harm in Mask Jokes*, UT NEWS (Oct. 14, 2020), <https://news.utexas.edu/2020/10/14/the-harm-in-mask-jokes/> (arguing that jokes about then candidate Joe Biden's mask wearing reinforced gender stereotypes that discouraged masking among men).

102. Natalie Marchant, *Omicron has Seen a Surge in COVID Misinformation. 2 Experts Explain How to Combat it*, WORLD ECON. F. (Jan. 31, 2021), <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/01/covid-misinformation-omicron-and-how-to-combat-it/>.

103. Kahn, *Masks, Culture Wars, and Public Health Expertise*, *supra* note 13, at 916-17 (describing attacks on mask wearers).

cial, ¹⁰⁴ and blockades of roads, which could impact access to hospitals. ¹⁰⁵ Taken collectively, these acts pose a challenge. Which of these acts are “weapons of the weak”? Which of them, if any, are worthy of celebration, if not emulation?

Clearly, from a public health perspective, questioning the efficacy of masks and vaccines is harmful. False news—the rumor/gossip part of the “weapons of the weak”—can cause harm to the extent they lead someone to forego a mask or a vaccine. ¹⁰⁶ Especially someone who, for better or worse, genuinely believes that vaccines have dangerous side effects. Thus, there is value in seeing any opposition to masks and vaccinations as dangerous. One sees something similar in the Statin Wars, in which the *British Journal of Medicine* got into hot water after running a letter to the editor critical of the use of statins to treat high cholesterol. ¹⁰⁷ The notion of harm in these types of situations, while real, is broad—too broad to be the basis of law or policy banning the spread of false information. ¹⁰⁸

Matters change when the tactics of anti-maskers shift from questioning masks to attacking mask wearers, which has occurred a number of times and in multiple locations during the pandemic. The question then becomes whether it is justifiable for the “weak” to use their “weapons.” For example, when Johnny Cash’s granddaughter was assaulted for wearing a mask at a CVS, was this a cause for celebra-

104. *Id.* at 918 (describing protests outside the homes of county health commissioners in California).

105. *Operation Gridlock rally caused delays during shift change at Sparrow Hospital in Lansing*, ABC NEWS (Apr. 16, 2020), <https://www.wxyz.com/news/coronavirus/operation-gridlock-rally-caused-delays-during-shift-change-at-lansing-hospital>.

106. See Ross Tapsell, *The Smartphone as the “Weapon of the Weak”: Assessing the Role of Communication Technologies in Malaysia’s Regime Change*, 37 JOURNAL OF CURRENT SOUTHEAST ASIAN AFFAIRS 9 (2018) (using James Scott’s “weapons of the weak” framework to assess social media campaigning during the Malaysia’s 2018 elections).

107. Kahn, *Masks, Culture Wars, and Public Health Expertise*, *supra* note 13, at 911 (describing the Stain Wars).

108. See András Koltay, *The Punishment of Scaremongering in the Hungarian Legal System. Freedom of Speech in the Times of the Covid-19 Pandemic*, (Nov. 23 2020) (unpublished research paper) (available at SSRN: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3735867).

tion?¹⁰⁹ An attempt at intimidation? Or an indication of the toll of the pandemic and the debate over masks on the fabric of society? What about the protests in June 2020 that occurred at the homes of California public health officials and led some of them to resign?¹¹⁰ There is a line to be drawn—both in the hujum and in the mask wars—between support for a position (even when based on false information) and threats and violence directed against a specific person.

There is a second aspect of Northrop’s deployment of “weapons of the weak” worth briefly discussing. This aspect considers who is “weak” and who is “strong.” Northrop makes the argument that Uzbek women who joined the party, many of whom veiled, were in a paradoxically powerful position.¹¹¹ Sure, they were women in a patriarchal society who, by taking off their paranjis exposed themselves to threats and violence, but their gender “marked them as privileged within the Soviet order.”¹¹² In an unconvincing manner, Northrop goes on to write that the unveiled faces of the female party members “provided an almost unassailable degree of political protection.”¹¹³ Protected as a political matter, yes. However, the same cannot be said about the 2,000 unveiled women murdered during the hujum.¹¹⁴

That said, the position of female party members—veiled or not—as “strong” raises some interesting questions about the battle over masks and vaccines. From the vantage point of the culture wars, it is easy to understand why pro-Trump anti-maskers might view themselves as “colonized.” Moreover, such a person might see a mask wearer as an agent of the state, similar to how an Uzbek might look at an unveiled female party member as powerful and threatening. During certain periods of the pandemic, mask wearers had state privilege: they could go where they liked without facing harassment. At the height of the pandemic, a mask refuser had to wonder whether they would get into a

109. Kahn, *Masks, Culture Wars, and Public Health Expertise*, *supra* note 13, at 913-14.

110. *Id.* at 918.

111. NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, at 225-33.

112. *Id.* at 226.

113. *Id.*

114. To be fair, Northrop also added that, along with protection, party membership brought expectation of superior moral behavior. *See id.* at 230 (describing show trial for unveiled women found drinking).

confrontation while shopping for groceries.¹¹⁵ In contrast, early in the pandemic, a masked reporter from a Twin Cities television center went to Minnesota to report on the mask issues, he found himself surrounded by an angry crowd that wanted him to take off his mask.¹¹⁶ Sure, he was scared; but to the people in Albany, Minnesota, *he* was the scary one.

Fear does not justify the harassment of mask wearers. We should all wear masks when necessary to prevent the spread of COVID. That said, history does not occur in a vacuum. The mask wars are not the first public health campaign, nor is it the first-time societies have come to blows over how to show the human face. For Douglas Northrop, the hujum was an ill-conceived policy that failed to achieve its stated goals. The state that attempted it was far from a liberal democracy, and yet it did not get the “job” done. This should provide a cautionary note, if not a rebuttal, to those mask supporters surprised and disappointed that a liberal democracy’s attempt to mandate what people must wear on their face was controversial. Similar controversies have happened before, and likely will happen again.

III. AGENCY, TRUST, AND HOPE: MARIANNE KAMP’S *THE NEW WOMAN IN UZBEKISTAN*

Northrop’s is not the only story about the hujum. Marianne Kamp spent years in Uzbekistan meeting with women who participated in the hujum and their descendants.¹¹⁷ She poured through volumes of *Yangi Yo’l* (New Path) magazine, which was sponsored by the women’s division of the Uzbekistan Communist Party and ran stories about Russian, Tatar, and Uzbek women.¹¹⁸ She told the story of the hujum from the perspective of the women and men who supported it—something

115. Kahn, *My Face, My Choice?*, *supra* note 13, at 699 (2021) (describing unmasked shopper attacked by fellow shoppers).

116. Kaelan Deese, *Reporter Harassed for Wearing a Mask While Covering a Restaurant Reopening-Turned-Protest*, THE HILL (May 23, 2020), <https://thehill.com/homenews/media/499311-reporter-harassed-for-wearing-a-mask-while-covering-a-restaurant-reopening>.

117. KAMP, *supra* note 2, at 300-02 (describing interviews in Uzbekistan from 1991-93 and 2001-04).

118. *Id.* at 99-122.

Northrop recognized, but ultimately faulted her for.¹¹⁹ She, in turn, faulted Northrop for relying too heavily on state archives and secret police files.¹²⁰ In actuality, the two accounts dovetail. By centering her account on the “new Uzbek woman,” Kamp’s bottom-up account of the hujum is the perfect counterpart to Northrop’s top-down approach, both as a matter of the historiography of the hujum, as well as the contemplation of our current mask wars.

Kamp recognizes that the hujum proper, the mass campaign that unfolded from 1927 to 1929, was directed from Moscow.¹²¹ However, she places it in a broader narrative about women’s rights and unveiling that preceded the hujum by decades and continued until the mid-twentieth century when most Uzbek women had unveiled.¹²² As we have seen, Northrop’s account of the hujum prioritized the role of Russian speaking anthropologists and social scientists, who in complete ignorance of Central Asian culture, launched a campaign to remove the paranji, declaring it dirty, unhygienic, and Uzbek.¹²³ By contrast, Kamp saw the hujum as the result of Islamic modernizers (Jadid), unveiled Tatar women, and feminists from Moscow and Tashkent.¹²⁴

Kamp’s story is one of Jadid families promoting women’s education because an educated mother would be better at teaching her chil-

119. Douglas Northrop, 113 *The American Historical Review*, 1630 (Dec. 1, 2008) (reviewing Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity and Unveiling under Communism*). Northrop describes Kamp’s “laudable emphasis on recovering the voices of Uzbek activists” but warns that “her sympathies risk suggesting that only a particular kind of women’s voice (favoring unveiling) is legitimate, voluntary, or representative.” *Id.*

120. Kamp, questioning Northrop’s conclusion that the veil became a symbol of resistance during the hujum, ascribed this to his heavy reliance on “Party archives and Russian-language publications for the 1920s, a period when questions of Uzbek identity were being articulated far more broadly and fully in the Uzbek press.” KAMP, *supra* note 2, at 242 n.30.

121. *Id.* at 150-51 (describing the origins of the hujum).

122. *Id.* at 225 (noting that the paranji eventually became rare).

123. NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, at 39 (noting how Bolshevik reformers sent to Central Asia “sounded as much Orientalist as Marxist” when describing their surroundings).

124. KAMP, *supra* note 2 at 32-53 (describing the role of the Jadids in promoting reform efforts).

dren the Quran than an uneducated one.¹²⁵ Her power of example was not the “guilt by association” of the proverka, where party status turned on the ability to convince family members to unveil. Kamp’s role models were Tatar women (Muslim, but from European Russia) who, by their example, encouraged Uzbek women to unveil.¹²⁶ Kamp also has a more positive view of situational unveiling: wearing a paranji at work, but not on the way there, does not make one a half-hearted feminist, or a closet Uzbek nationalist; rather, it makes one a human being trying to navigate a double bind imposed by patriarchy and Soviet rule.¹²⁷ Veil and risk party discipline; unveil and risk violence, threats, and terror.

From the perspective of the mask wars, Kamp’s account of the hujum raises several interesting points. The first point concerns burqa bans and the argument that regulating the face is deplorable because the Soviets did it in the hujum. The hujum described by Kamp is tamer than the one Northrop describes. It is largely about women choosing to unveil, sometimes after encouragement. The problem with the hujum, if there was one, was that it did not go far enough. In the face of patriarchal violence, the Soviet state did not adequately protect Uzbek women who wanted to unveil. So, perhaps, the hujum is not the example that should be avoided, as previously mentioned in this essay. The Soviets similarly rejected a paranji ban. Why are European states—or India for that matter¹²⁸—unable to reject bans on the burqa and hijab?¹²⁹

125. *Id.* at 43. Interestingly, Kamp is the daughter of Mennonite missionaries. Her mother used to wear a head covering which she (the mother) dispensed with when she went to college. *Id.* at x.

126. *Id.* at 32-33, 41 (describing Tatars as occupying a middle role between Europeans and Uzbeks, and describing how Uzbek reformers relied on Tatar works).

127. *Id.* at 231-33.

128. *See India’s Hindu groups want wider ban of hijab after court verdict*, ALJAZEERA (Mar. 16, 2022), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/3/16/india-hindu-groups-muslims-wider-ban-hijab-karnataka-court-verdict>.

129. Both Kamp and Northrop, for all their disagreements about the hujum, are skeptical of the current efforts to ban veiling. *See* KAMP, *supra* note 2, at 236-37 (noting that unveiling women during the hujum and hijab wearers in post-Soviet Uzbekistan have been targeted for representing “foreign” values); NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, at 354 (viewing the link between the hijab and terrorism as modern-day continuation of the colonialist values of the hujum).

The second point comes from Kamp's description of the debate over the paranji ban. While Kamp and Northrop cover the same ground, there is a difference in tone. When discussing arguments against the ban, Kamp focuses more on the general ineffectiveness of mandates rather than the concerns about Soviet power and the difficulty of convincing women to unveil. Some workers in the women's division worried that the ban was "premature" and would encourage women to remain at home.¹³⁰ This argument was also made during the debates of face veil bans in Europe in the 2010s.¹³¹ At most, the call was for "manly revolutionaries," not pro-Soviet ones.¹³²

Meanwhile, the editors of *Yangi Yo'l* were in unwavering support of a ban and refused to run stories opposing one.¹³³ There were marches and petition drives.¹³⁴ The main argument of the ban supporters was echoed in the debates over the burqa: a ban would make it easier for women to choose to unveil because they could use the ban as an excuse.¹³⁵ As stated by Sadoat Shameiva, a women's activist interviewed by Kamp, "[I]f unveiling were not a matter of individual choice, but were required by the government, then women would happily unveil, and men would cease to hold women individually responsible for defying their authority and bringing them dishonor."¹³⁶

The same idea was reflected in an anecdote Kamp tells about how, in the early 1920s, To'raxon Ibrohimova, a woman's activist from the town of Kokand, visited Moscow to attend the All Russian Conference of Soviets.¹³⁷ The head of the conference asked Ibrohimova to remove her paranji.¹³⁸ She hesitated, and Joseph Stalin, who was standing next to her, said: "Comrade Ibrohimova, since the delegates

130. *Id.* at 208.

131. See Adam Taylor, *Banning burqas isn't a sensible approach to terrorism*, WASHINGTON POST (Aug. 12, 2016), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/world-views/wp/2016/08/12/banning-burqas-isnt-a-sensible-response-to-terrorism/> (noting that burqa bans tend to isolate women).

132. KAMP, *supra* note 2, at 208.

133. *Id.* at 209 (describing one-sided coverage of proposed ban).

134. *Id.*

135. *Id.* at 207-08.

136. *Id.* at 211 (paraphrase of oral interview).

137. *Id.* at 143.

138. *Id.*

requested it, then you must remove the paranji.”¹³⁹ She did so to great applause.¹⁴⁰ For Kamp, this was an example of how a request from an older man removed the stigma associated with unveiling.¹⁴¹ This example explains the situational nature of veiling in Uzbekistan even before the start of the hujum in 1927. It also illustrates the hope that an unveiling decree would provide informal, symbolic authority for women to remove their veils.

There is also a striking difference between Northrop’s perspective and Kamp’s perspective regarding the symbolism of a potential paranji ban. For Northrop, the ban was a proposed law that was to be assessed narrowly in terms of its enforceability and direct legal impact. For Kamp, the proposed decree would be invaluable on symbolic grounds. As a student of Holocaust denial law, and memory laws more generally, one can appreciate the power of law to have an influence, even if that law is never (or rarely) followed. One can say the same about burqa laws, which clearly had a symbolic goal of liberal Europe standing up to a certain type of Islam. Whether the symbolism is admirable is another point entirely.¹⁴²

Likewise, mask and vaccine mandates have both symbolic and legal dimensions. A mask mandate, even if not enforced, gives a shop, restaurant, or hotel owner something they can point to when asking a patron to wear a mask. This question arose during one of the more peculiar moments of this author’s fifteen minutes of fame as a mask “expert.”¹⁴³ A reporter from the American Automobile Association

139. *Id.*

140. *Id.*

141. *Id.* at 277 n.44. According to Kamp, Stalin’s request demonstrated his knowledge of Uzbek customs, especially the idea that an Uzbek could not ignore a request from an “elder” without losing face. *Id.*

142. See KAHN, *supra* note 15, at 7-8 (describing Holocaust denial prosecutions and the legal outcomes that followed from them as symbolic). At one point, I was supportive of the idea that a Holocaust denial law could send a symbolic message repudiating Holocaust denial. See Rob Kahn, *Can the Law Understand the Harm of Genocide Denial?*, in DENIALISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS (Roland Moerland, Hans Nelen, Jan Willems eds., Intersentia 2016). More recently I have become more critical of memory laws (including Holocaust denial bans). See Rob Kahn, *Free Speech, Official History, and Nationalist Politics, Toward a Typology of Objections to Memory Laws*, 31 FLA. J. INT’L L. 33 (2019).

143. Kahn, *Masks, Culture Wars, and Public Health Expertise*, *supra* note 13, at 3 (describing the AAA interview). The interview never ran. *Id.*

asked how hotels should respond to the mask wars since hotel lobbies were neutral territory where mask wearers and mask refusers would be in close contact. In this type of situation having a formal policy, even if rarely enforced, might help keep the peace.¹⁴⁴

The third issue concerns the motivations underlying the act of veiling and unveiling. According to Kamp, the Soviet state, with all the pressure it placed on women to unveil,¹⁴⁵ had limited ability to protect women who actually unveiled.¹⁴⁶ Because of this, Kamp disagrees with the argument that women who unveiled were “resisting” the Soviet state. To the contrary, Kamp argues that veiling was a “rational bargain” women entered into with a state that had no real interest in undermining patriarchy.¹⁴⁷ Taking this approach, which views women as rational actors rather than pawns in a broader struggle, shows respect towards these women and their human agency and dignity and allows for a clearer assessment of the true scope of the resistance to the *hujum*.

The same type of analysis is helpful in the mask wars. Not everyone who refuses to wear a mask or get vaccinated is a resister, even if they are a red state COVID denier. As noted, there are many reasons why one might not want to wear a mask. One might have asthma; another, might have trouble hearing and goes by reading lips. One might have forgotten to bring a mask. Or, like Uzbek women who veiled as a part of the “rational bargain,” one might live in a community where masking is uncommon and choose to avoid controversy. In this instance, the rejection of masking would be done out of conformity rather than ideological conviction. Indeed, there are studies suggesting

144. *Id.* See also Alex Gagitano, *Major Hotels to Require Guests Wear Masks Nationwide*, THE HILL (July 20, 2020, 7:23 PM), <https://thehill.com/business-a-lobbying/business-a-lobbying/508213-major-hotels-to-require-guests-wear-masks-nationwide> (describing hotel mask policies).

145. KAMP, *supra* note 2, at 176-77. Kamp concedes the *hujum* was “coercive” in the pressure the state and party placed on Uzbek women to unveil. *Id.* (describing pressure on family members and regarding jobs).

146. *Id.* at 233 (noting the “rather small compensation” the Soviet state could offer “for the risks she would take by unveiling”).

147. *Id.*

that masking behavior is contagious; if one person masks, others are more likely to mask and vice versa.¹⁴⁸

A fourth issue concerns attempts by hujum supporters to engage progressive mullahs to issue a fatwa against the paranji.¹⁴⁹ The notion that some Islamic clergymen were willing to support the hujum is not surprising given the broader movement by the Jadids to promote women's rights. The proposed fatwa would say that the paranji had no basis in the Quran or sharia. As Kamp points out, this possibility put the party in a quandary.¹⁵⁰ The hujum was not going well, so the party would benefit from any support it could get. On the other hand, running a fatwa against the paranji in a party newspaper risked elevating the role of the clergy and losing party control over the hujum. *Yangi Yo'l* ran an article against a fatwa, arguing that it was unnecessary and would be ignored in any event.¹⁵¹

Kamp presents the fatwa as a lost opportunity. Had a fatwa run in the party press, "the course of unveiling might have eased considerably."¹⁵² However, unveiling was not the primary goal of the party, even though it consumed the activists on the ground. Rather, the hujum was intended by the party "to transform society by diminishing traditional authority and consolidating its own authority."¹⁵³ In this regard, Kamp's conclusion aligns with Northrop: the ultimate goal of the hujum was to enhance state power, not to fight patriarchy or improve the position of Uzbek women; these were simply a means to an end. Forced to choose between a campaign to attract women to modern Islamic values, that stood a good chance of success, and a cam-

148. See Ralph Lewis, *From Fashion to Suicide: Why We Imitate Each Other*, PSYCHOLOGY TODAY (Mar. 11, 2011), <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/finding-purpose/202103/fashion-suicide-why-we-imitate-each-other> (describing the role of mimicry in human behavior); Monica Torres, *How to Cope When You're The Only One Wearing A Mask At Work*, HUFFINGTON POST (Mar. 4, 2022, 3:42 PM), https://www.huffpost.com/entry/only-one-wearing-mask-work_1_62210ac2e4b0c393575344c8 (describing the pressure to conform faced by mask wearers as the omicron wave subsides).

149. KAMP, *supra* note 2, at 181-85.

150. *Id.* at 182.

151. *Id.* at 184-85.

152. *Id.* at 185.

153. *Id.*

paign to turn them into party loyalists that was likely to fail, the party leadership chose loyalty over substance.

The emphasis on loyalty over pragmatics has some echoes with the public health campaigns in support of mask wearing and vaccination. The question is whether one wants to influence conduct or whether one wants to influence something deeper, such as the hearts and minds of the public. In other words, is it enough that people wear a mask or get the shot, or is the issue rather that they believe in the mask or the shot? The way one answers these questions will, in turn, influence what a mask or vaccine policy might look like. Some of the most notable COVID policies, such as rewarding people for getting vaccinated, carry less weight if the goal is ideological conversion rather than compliance.¹⁵⁴ At the same time, the ideological conversion seems to run counter to the stated position of the public health establishment regarding masks. The mask is not a symbol; it's simply a tool.¹⁵⁵ If this is the case, it should not matter *why* anyone wears a mask.

COVID denial, and the denial of the effectiveness of masks and vaccines imposes costs on society. A non-believer might, for instance, convince others to not mask or vaccinate, increasing the risk posed by society as a whole.¹⁵⁶ There comes a point, however, when the public health establishment's interest in what a vaccine doubter thinks about masks or vaccines places loyalty to the system above the behavioral intervention itself. Even during an emergency—such as the COVID pandemic—life goes on. As Kari Nixon points out in her study of Victorian era pandemics, responses to smallpox or cholera outbreaks are always about balancing the imperative of fighting the disease against the need to keep the economy functioning and the society as vibrant as

154. See *COVID-19 Vaccine Incentives*, NAT'L GOVERNOR'S ASS'N (Oct. 19, 2021), <https://www.nga.org/center/publications/covid-19-vaccine-incentives/> (describing state policies to reward reluctant "vaxers" with lottery tickets, gift cards, and in Alabama the opportunity to drive their car on the Talladega Speedway).

155. Kahn, *Masks, Culture Wars, and Public Health Expertise*, *supra* note 13, 907-09 (describing the argument that an anti-COVID mask is simply a tool, and nothing more).

156. See Marchant, *supra* note 103 (noting that COVID misinformation, even if not deliberate, affects personal health decisions as well as eroding trust in societal institutions).

possible.¹⁵⁷ An argument that emerged in April and May of 2020 that covering one's face would speed reopening is an example of this type of pragmatic argument;¹⁵⁸ shaming mask abstainers as "selfish," as Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey did, is less effective.¹⁵⁹

Interestingly, Kamp's final message is hopeful. As the relative liberalism of the New Economic Policy of the early 1920s faded, Soviet rule in Uzbekistan became increasingly authoritarian.¹⁶⁰ The hujum forced Uzbek women to choose between opposing patriarchy and opposing Soviet power. It was a choice between being purged and being assaulted.¹⁶¹ This creates an agency trap in which, given competing hegemonies, any decision by a woman about wearing the paranji became an act of compulsion made under duress.¹⁶² As a result, the Uzbek women, the ones actually making these decisions, are silenced.¹⁶³

Observers deepen the agency trap by treating its walls as impenetrable rather than porous. For instance, Northrop, describing an earlier article by Kamp,¹⁶⁴ said that her position that unveiling could create

157. KARI NIXON, QUARANTINE LIFE FROM CHOLERA TO COVID-19: WHAT PANDEMICS TEACH US ABOUT PARENTING, WORK, LIFE AND COMMUNITIES FROM THE 1700S TO TODAY 19 (2021).

158. Summer Concepcion, *United We Mask: GOP-ers View Mask-Wearing as Key to Reopening Economy*, TPM (May 24, 2020, 5:35 PM), <https://talkingpointsmemo.com/news/republicans-mask-debate-trump-reopening>.

159. See *Minneapolis Mayor Frey Signs Requirement for Face Coverings in City*, CBS MINN. (May 21, 2020, 9:50 PM), <https://minnesota.cbslocal.com/2020/05/21/minneapolis-mayor-frey-to-sign-requirement-for-face-coverings-in-city/> (reassuring the public that the city's new mask mandate would only be enforced against "selfish" mask refusers, rather than people who forgot to wear their masks).

160. See NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, at 120, 126 (describing the "conciliatory" atmosphere of the New Economic Policy (NEP) and how, by 1927, the fading of the NEP had led the party to abandon softer cultural approaches).

161. KAMP, *supra* note 2, at 231-32. A woman who remains veiled does so because of patriarchy; a woman who unveils is a Soviet dupe. *Id.*

162. *Id.* at 10-13.

163. NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, at 370. In this light consider Northrop's conclusion that the oral histories relied on by Kamp are less reliable than the police and party sources he used because, regarding the oral histories, "seventy years of Soviet mythology regarding the hujum had left its mark." *Id.* at 370. Not only are Uzbek women in a bind, so are their stories. *Id.*

164. NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, at 67 n.85 (referencing Marianne Kamp, *Pilgrimage and Performance: Uzbek Women and the Imagining of Uzbekistan in the 1920s*,

an Uzbek nation would only apply “insofar as national identity was synonymous with the Soviet state and a personally pro-Soviet outlook.”¹⁶⁵ By reducing unveiling to a pro-Soviet action, Northrop denies the possibility that someone might reject the paranji while still questioning the Soviet system.¹⁶⁶ Further, Northrop reached this conclusion without considering any of the lived accounts of Uzbek women’s experiences as Kamp described in her article. Instead, Northrop seems to assume that women, or most women, who unveiled during the hujum were Soviet dupes.

The way out of the agency trap is to tell the stories. Kamp describes how, at great personal risk, Uzbek women threw off their paranjis, strategically put them back on in some cases, and worked to create a society in which women had the choice of whether to cover their face.¹⁶⁷ The stories Kamp relates are not consistent in that some women chose to wear the paranji. Kamp’s commitment to choice remained consistent. Describing the situation in Uzbekistan in the late 1990s, after a government crackdown on the hijab,¹⁶⁸ which had replaced the paranji as the garment most often worn in Uzbekistan,¹⁶⁹ Kamp noted: “Veiling in Uzbekistan in 2000 required as much courage as unveiling in 1927.”¹⁷⁰

More generally, the message of *The New Woman in Uzbekistan* is one of hope and patience. The women of *Yangi Y’ol* ran articles in favor of unveiling year after year.¹⁷¹ Not only that, considering its long-

34 INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES 263-78 (2002)). See also NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, at 25 (Northrop stating that he read Kamp’s doctoral dissertation, which formed the basis of *The New Woman in Uzbekistan*).

165. NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, at 67 n.85.

166. *Id.* at 233. Ironically, Northrop has no difficulty with the opposite situation—a member of the party who nevertheless wears a paranji. *Id.*

167. KAMP, *supra* note 2, at 15-17 (describing her reliance on women’s stories).

168. *Id.* at 235-36. The government campaigned against “foreign” Islamic influence at a time when many Uzbek women wore the hijab, a garment associated with global Islam. *Id.* The post-Soviet state had previously banned the paranji. NORTHROP, VEILED EMPIRE, *supra* note 2, at 353.

169. KAMP, *supra* note 2, at 235 (Kamp’s observations during her visits to Uzbekistan in the 1990s confirmed that paranjis were rarely worn).

170. *Id.* at 236.

171. *Id.* at 100 (describing the staff of *Yangi Yo’l* as ardent supporters of unveiling).

term effects, the hujum was successful. The active phase of the hujum ended in 1929, due to lack of success and the party's growing disinterest.¹⁷² Yet, in the years that followed, progress toward unveiling continued slowly but steadily, until by the 1940s and 50s the paranji was uncommon.¹⁷³ The hujum, while not a success on the short run, bore fruit over time, just like the COVID era campaigns to encourage wearing masks and getting vaccinated may take time to ultimately succeed.

The contrast with Northrop is notable. Eager to embellish a narrative of failure, Northrop argues that the hujum persisted into the 1930s,¹⁷⁴ and that during this time Soviet tactics "only strengthened local practices of female veiling and seclusion."¹⁷⁵ The final change to unveiling came only with Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union, the dislocation of Soviet industry to Central Asia that followed from the war, and the resulting influx of Europeans into Central Asia.¹⁷⁶ In addition, the successes of the Soviet Army during World War II added to the prestige of the Soviet lifestyle, and by the early 1950s, generational change made an impact in leading women to reject the paranji.¹⁷⁷ Despite these successes, the hujum should not get the credit because its failure did not contribute to the successful unveiling in the 1950s.

Without being an expert on Soviet Central Asia, it is difficult to say who is right about the scope of unveiling in the 1930s, or the ultimate reasons why Uzbek women gave up the paranji. That said, the debate over the success of the hujum ultimately turns on values. Northrop sees the hujum as an attempt to impose an outside imperial

172. *Id.* at 216-17. The Women's Division of the Communist Party, which had been instrumental in launching the hujum, was broken up in 1930. *Id.* at 217. Kamp concedes that state sponsored unveiling initiatives continued in the 1930s. *Id.*

173. KAMP, *supra* note 2, at 219-22 (describing role of collectivization in unveiling).

See also Elizabeth Dean, *The Soviet Unveiling Campaign in 1920s Uzbekistan: Class, Gender, and Politics* (May 2, 2017) (honors thesis, University of Texas) (arguing based on primary sources that one reason women on collective farms abandoned the paranji was that the garment got in the way of driving tractors and other agricultural work).

174. NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, at 315 (arguing that the 1930s saw a change in tactics but not a retreat).

175. *Id.* at 316.

176. *Id.* at 349-50.

177. *Id.* at 350.

habit on an unwilling colonial population.¹⁷⁸ As such, it is not surprising that he saw the persistence of veiling, and the slow nature of change, as evidence of failure.¹⁷⁹ By contrast, Kamp saw the unveiling as part of a multi-faceted struggle for women's rights that took decades to unfold.¹⁸⁰ As a result, she had a more upbeat view of the *hujum* than did Northrop.¹⁸¹

Questions of Kamp's message of hope and warning of the agency trap are also present in the COVID mask wars. When the goal of masking campaigns is 100% compliance, it is easy to view the campaign as a failure. Consider, for example, a study of mask-wearing among Wisconsin retail shoppers published in August 2020.¹⁸² While the study makes some useful insights about the need for mask-wearing in high-density stores,¹⁸³ it is tone-deaf in its maximalist approach. The study tells us that "every breath and word spoken without a mask on . . . increases risk of aerosolized virus spread."¹⁸⁴ It is true mandates have helped with minimizing the spread through the enforcement of masks. Yet even with mandates, the study concluded that "a portion of shoppers (~4%) still resist or wear masks ineffectively."¹⁸⁵ Just as the Soviet authorities, according to Douglas Northrop, would not be happy until every last Uzbek woman took off her *paranji*, the

178. See, e.g., *id.* at 286 (comparing the Soviet unveiling campaign to similar campaigns in colonial India).

179. NORTHROP, *supra* note 2, at 315.

180. KAMP, *supra* note 2, at 215.

181. *Id.* (arguing that the changes between the 1930s and 1950s "broke the dynamic of women's seclusion and their exclusion from the public arena").

182. See Michael H. Haischer, Rachel Beilfuss, Meggie Rose Hart, Lauren Opielinski, David Wrucke, Gretchen Zirgaitis, Toni D. Uhrich & Sandra K. Hunter, *Who is Wearing a Mask? Gender-, Age- and Location-related Differences During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, PLOS ONE (Aug. 18, 2020) *preprint*, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7561164/>.

183. *Id.* at 5 (e.g., the authors conclude that density in retail stores is relatively high – even in rural areas).

184. *Id.* at 8.

185. *Id.* at 9 (moreover, "resist" is a loaded word. Is every person who fails to wear a mask a "resister?").

authors of the Wisconsin mask study are likewise upset that four percent of Wisconsinites “still resist.”¹⁸⁶

If, however, one accepts that progress towards masking and vaccination can be slow and that partial (96%) masking is better than no masking, there are grounds for hope. In support of the campaign towards masking, however, comes a warning that supporters of mask and vaccine campaigns should be careful to avoid the agency trap. The masking agency trap would interpret every moment of public reluctance towards masking or getting vaccinated, to prove that a person is a COVID denier, rejects science, or is selfish.¹⁸⁷ For example, some people have more difficulty wearing a mask, while others are not opposed to the COVID vaccine but are scared of it. In a society where trust is in short supply, efforts to encourage mask and vaccine adherence should focus on carrots rather than sticks, social support rather than shaming, and criminal penalties.¹⁸⁸

Most importantly, the campaign against COVID requires listening to each other and trying to understand the divergent values and opinions that drive people’s decision-making. Instead of treating maskers as liberals and anti-maskers as conservatives—consider treating each other as humans, not political groups. While Northrop chose the political route of labeling the Uzbek press of the 1930s as untrustworthy because it is “Soviet”—a term he never describes¹⁸⁹—Kamp chose to include voices of women who disagree with her point of view. For example, Kamp describes how some of her older interviewees questioned why, in the 1990s, younger Uzbek women were so eager to cover themselves up.¹⁹⁰

186. *Id.* at 9; *See also id.* at 7, the authors speak of the need for masking to be “universal” enough “to have a significant effect on the epidemiological curve” but never specify what that number is.

187. *See, e.g.,* Kahn, *Culture Wars, and Public Health Expertise*, *supra* note 13, at 911 (noting the connection between COVID denial and climate change denial).

188. For an example of a better way to encourage vaccine use, see Anita Sreedhar & Anand Gopal, *Behind Low Vaccination Rates Lurks a More Profound Social Weakness*, *NEW YORK TIMES* (Dec. 3, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/03/opinion/vaccine-hesitancy-covid.html> (arguing that people who feel supported by social institutions are more likely to trust public health officials when it comes to COVID vaccines).

189. NORTHROP, *supra* note 2 at 369 (with a Cold War wink and a nod Northrop tells the reader: “The Uzbek language Soviet press was, after all, Soviet”).

190. KAMP, *supra* note 2, at 234.

These women are not derided as Soviet, anti-Islamic, or out of touch with reality; rather, Kamp took their voices as a starting point to further examine and explain the thought of this era.

The same should be done with reluctant maskers, examining their voices to understand and explain them. Yet, unfortunately, the authors of the Wisconsin mask study assume that anyone who fails to mask—or to wear a mask properly—is a “resistant shopper” ready to heap “verbal or physical” abuse on store employees seeking to enforce a mask mandate.¹⁹¹ These claims lack evidence. Nor is there any space in the study for an unmasked person who was forgetful, has breathing problems, or, while “resistant,” is not abusive.¹⁹²

For the authors of the Wisconsin study, every person who fails to wear a mask or improperly wears one is a potential outcast. The writers did not suggest how to persuade the unmasked shoppers to change their ways; instead, they relied on mask mandates. While calls for universal masking made sense in August 2020, when there were no effective vaccines, the Wisconsin study’s assumptions about anti-maskers are counterproductive. If society wants to move forward, people need to listen to and try to convince the Kyrie Irving and Kirk Cousins of this world, rather than relying on legal coercion and public shaming. Marianne Kamp’s focus on the human agency of her interviewees in *The New Women of Uzbekistan* provides a hopeful example to emulate.

IV. CONCLUSION: THE HUJUM AND THE COVID MASK WARS

Many questions still exist regarding what should be made of the hujum and what it means for the mask wars. We know a totalitarian state, close to the height of its powers,¹⁹³ struggled to convince Uzbek women to reveal their faces. Consequently, the totalitarian nature of the Soviet state might make the hujum seem irrelevant, at least for lib-

191. Haischer et al., *supra* note 183, at 7-8.

192. *Id.* at 7 (the study also seems to assume the choice is “voluntary compliance” versus abuse leaving out intermediate categories such as grudging compliance, where the user voluntarily wears the mask but is not happy about it). Is it enough that I wear the mask? Must I also *like* it?

193. A decade later, the state would launch the Great Terror which had horrific results in Uzbekistan. See KHALID, *supra* note 2, at 384-88 (describing 1937-38 Great Terror in Uzbekistan).

eral democracies. After all, in the U.S., there are checks and balances that make the type of governmental campaign like the Soviet hujum an impossibility. At the same time, the hujum was a massive social change experiment, conducted in a surprisingly open and fluid environment. Moreover, the hujum was the subject of a heated debate among historians, one touching on the meaning of coercion and human agency. Therefore, the struggles the Soviet authorities faced during the hujum, and the debate between Douglas Northrop and Marianne Kamp about hujum can teach society about the current, protracted COVID-era battles over masks and vaccines.

From the perspective of Douglas Northrop's *Veiled Empire*, the hujum is a warning about state overreaching. Attempting to change a well-entrenched social practice from the top down is a heavy lift, one most likely to fail. At the same time, Northrop's interpretation of the resistance to the hujum as an anti-Soviet revolt inspired by Uzbek nationalism highlights the dangers of forcing events on the ground onto preconceived notions of political or ideological conflict. Just as the hujum was more than a colonial struggle, the mask wars are more than a chapter in the fight between red and blue America. Northrop's account also raises challenging questions about when and whether the targets/victims of governmental social engineering campaigns are entitled to use the "weapons of the weak" to strike back against the state and its agents. Northrop's "weapons of the weak" cause a challenging line-drawing problem in the mask wars. If anti-maskers are the "weak," they can cause harm with their weapons from their anti-covid position based on false information, threats, and violence.

Marianne Kamp's *The New Soviet Woman* paints a rosier picture. By emphasizing hope, patience, and telling women's stories, Kamp offers a bottom-up account of the hujum and highlights a more balanced approach to navigating the "minefield" of behavioral change.¹⁹⁴ To be sure, the hujum was not perfect; the state coerced women into unveiling and then failed to protect them leading to violence. At the same time, however, women responded in creative ways that showed their agency and made the hujum a partial success; for example, by unveiling once they arrived at work.¹⁹⁵ Celebrating these partial behavior changes as victories rather than defeats helped the women

194. KAMP, *supra* note 2, at 13.

195. *Id.* at 178.

fighting for the hujum on the ground maintain their morale. Public health officials should take a page from Kamp's account of the hujum in their campaigns to encourage mask-wearing and vaccinations. Following Kamp's perspective means celebrating the small victories in behavior change and relying on persuasion, not force, by listening to the resisters "as human beings."

Finally, the hujum has broader lessons about how societies should approach the human face. As noted in the Introduction, face authoritarianism, the effort of the state or social groups to compel the showing or hiding of the human face, is a common feature of human societies, especially modern ones.¹⁹⁶ The human face is central to the modern conception of self, a circumstance that makes restrictions over the face a "battlefield."¹⁹⁷ Society can, however, recognize that these battles over the face have costs, as shown through both the hujum and the mask wars. Today a face-covering peace treaty is needed. People must accept that for some, authentic life in a modern society requires showing one's face,¹⁹⁸ just as others will find masks comforting.¹⁹⁹ A liberal society should encourage members of society to develop thick skins when it comes to masking. Lee Bollinger, for example, argued that the years since Skokie have encouraged Americans to develop thick skins regarding extremist speech.²⁰⁰ If done properly, society will find clever, creative ways to bridge the tensions associated with divergent mask-wearing practices.²⁰¹

196. See Pollock, *supra* note 19; Horrii, *supra* note 20, and accompanying texts.

197. Leone, *supra* note 20, at 46.

198. See Kahn, *supra* note 26 at 7 (relating living together to European privacy norms), for a discussion on the idea that "living together" requires showing one's face.

199. Leone, *supra* note 20, at 59-60 (noting that the meanings gleaned from masks depend on the interpretive context).

200. LEE BOLLINGER, *THE TOLERANT SOCIETY: FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND EXTREMIST SPEECH IN AMERICA* 119-133 (1986) (describing how a broad toleration of speech makes for a more tolerant citizenry).

201. See MATTEO BONOTTI & STEVEN ZECH, *RECOVERING CIVILITY DURING COVID-19* 79-81 (2021) (describing how personalized masks and see through masks can increase civility while also protecting against COVID); see also *id.* at 89-91 for Bonotti and Zech's call for exercising politeness when asking someone to wear a mask. While the two authors do not address the situation where someone masks because of a personal choice, their emphasis on politeness and civility show that there are alternatives to mask mandates.

While there will likely always exist situations where masking is necessary as a health measure²⁰² and unmasking as part of a security check, the default position should be face libertarianism. When possible, the person should decide whether to reveal their face. Just as important, when masking is necessary, society should focus on outward compliance, not inward loyalty. If masking is a tool, so be it. But treating the COVID mask as a symbol of loyalty to the state, or a preferred political position poses great potential for harm. When people get caught in the middle—like the asthmatic Democrat who cannot bear to wear a mask—the possibility for creative problem-solving becomes much harder. According to Marianne Kamp, a fatwa against the paranji running in state newspapers might have protected women and encouraged further unveiling,²⁰³ yet Soviet authorities were unwilling to give a religious figure any authority. Likewise, the campaigns for COVID masking have been too eager to focus on COVID-denial, science denial, and all negatives associated with red states. Any campaign for behavioral change, especially during public health emergencies, should focus on behavior, not changing hearts and minds.²⁰⁴

202. Although, as the COVID pandemic is hopefully slowly transitioning to its endemic phase, the necessity of mask mandates has been called in to question by some public health experts. See Keren Landman, *It's Time to Think Outside the Mask Mandate*, VOX (Apr. 15, 2022), <https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2022/4/15/23022102/jennifer-nuzzo-mask-mandate-covid-pandemic-vaccines-testing-treatment-public-health> (in an interview with Jennifer Nuzzo she is skeptical of universal mask mandates given the failure of the prevention of the omicron wave despite the high level of masking in South Korea and Hong Kong).

203. KAMP, *supra* note 2, at 181-85.

204. See Landman, *supra* note 203 (for a positive example of Jennifer Nuzzo contrast of mask mandates and lockdowns (blunt measures) with day-to-day measures to combat COVID, such as encouraging vaccination, and letting individuals make the choice of when to mask).