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Asylum, Immigration and the Circulation of Unease at Lunar House

As the global war on terror continues to be waged, the associated rise in fear, suspicion and mistrust has far reaching implications for minority populations in the UK. Individuals and groups who are seen and identified as different have begun to experience a disproportionate impact of the heightened security concerns. For example, the number of Asians stopped and searched in the UK rose by 75% between 2000 and 2004, compared to a 66% increase among blacks and only a 4% increase among whites¹. Such impacts have coincided with more comprehensive police powers under the Terrorism Act (2000) according to which, although 'Officers must take particular care not to discriminate against members of minority ethnic groups ... there *may be circumstances ... where it is appropriate for officers to take account of a person's ethnic origin in selecting persons to be stopped in response to a specific terrorist threat*'². While this so-called 'ethnic profiling' of police activities appears to have little practical benefit (13 per cent of stops and searches under normal police powers result in an arrest compared to just 1.7% of stops and searches on suspicion of terrorism³) the statistics reveal the racialised implications of the war on terror⁴.

As part of the singling out of minority groups, asylum seekers constitute a category that is viewed with particular suspicion and hostility in the UK. Despite increasing concern about 'home grown' terrorism and the internal threat to national security, almost a quarter of all those arrested under anti-terrorism legislation between 2001 and 2005 (232 out of 963 people, or 24%) had previously applied for asylum⁵. Given that the asylum seeking community in the UK constitutes less than 0.1% of the population, this over-representation far exceeds that suffered by most minority groups. Such an outcome is set

against a backdrop of sustained hostility towards asylum seekers in the UK throughout large sections of the popular tabloid press: ‘The asylum shambles is the sea in which terror most easily swims’, the *Daily Mail* attests⁶. Such sentiments are in keeping with a long line of criticisms levied at the printed media by scholars working in the field of forced migration⁷. The national newspaper press, for example, have been argued to conflate the various types of illegality and migration⁸, overlook the link between international violence, civil wars and asylum seeking⁹, and disseminate inaccurate impressions of the level of welfare benefits accruing to asylum seekers as well as their preferential access to employment and housing markets¹⁰. Following a number of authors who are critical of the language used to construct the asylum issue in the UK¹¹ Coole (2002) argues that these deficiencies relate to a broader linguistic framework utilised in the popular press that emphasises the illegal, untrustworthy nature of asylum seekers on the one hand, and their copious numbers on the other¹². In a survey of Scottish newspapers, Mollard (2001) finds that over twice as many articles depict asylum seekers using words with negative connotations, such as ‘scroungers’, ‘floodgates’ and ‘bogus’, than with positive language¹³. What is more, negative depictions appear to have a significant effect: a MORI poll carried out in 2000 revealed that the average *estimated* level of asylum seeker benefits in the UK was £113 per week, far in excess of the £36.54 per week level at the time of the poll¹⁴. Similarly, a 2002 newspaper poll recorded that the average estimated share of worldwide asylum seekers coming to the UK was 23%, more than ten times the actual share at the time¹⁵.

One of the striking features about the association between terrorism and asylum seekers in the UK is its counter-intuitiveness. As Frank Furedi (2002) points out, suspicion about a large number of purported risks and safety concerns in modern society persist despite good reasons to be sceptical about their accuracy, and fear of asylum seekers in no exception¹⁶. Between 1999 and 2006, the number of principle asylum claims received by the UK plummeted from 71 000 to 23 500, representing a 67% reduction¹⁷. In 2001, as concern over international terrorism mounted, these figures compared to 23 million tourists, business people and students who stayed in the UK and a total of 88 million who passed through the UK’s borders during that year, dwarfing the number of asylum

applications received¹⁸. The association between asylum seekers and threats to national security is therefore questionable in the light of the comparatively small magnitude of asylum migration flows¹⁹. What is more, it is reasonable to assume that claiming asylum is an increasingly unattractive route into a country from a terrorist's perspective. Asylum seekers regularly come into close contact with authorities not only at border control points but also before and after they have passed through the border. If they elicit the suspicion of border control officers asylum seekers can be immediately detained, without charge or release date, subject to the discretion of unelected, civil immigration personnel²⁰. Furthermore, their freedom of movement within the UK is becoming increasingly constrained. Their accommodation has been contingent upon their residence in a particular area since 2000, they often have to check in at local police stations on a regular basis, and adult asylum seekers who cannot show that they have experienced torture have been subject to electronic tagging since 2006. For these reasons, any seriously minded terrorist is unlikely to choose asylum seeking as a way to access the UK if there are alternative routes available.

Another striking feature about the fear of terrorism is its ability to serve as a basis for actions that actually contribute towards the threat of aggression itself. Along with a number of other authors, Didier Bigo has recently begun to theorise the links between fear, suspicion and unease on the one hand and institutionalised practices of security in the context of the war on terror on the other²¹. Through an examination of societal unease about security, Bigo suggests that states can be active in actually producing and sustaining discourses of fear and anxiety through the very security policies and procedures that they enact. For Bigo, by utilising a range of bio-political techniques spanning geo-surveillance, risk management and the employment of specific, subjective discourses pertaining to security, the subjects and spaces of security are continually disseminated and ratified by the state in the name of national security itself²².

In the context of minority populations in the UK, we can clearly see the negative effects of the intrusive, biopolitical attempts to identify security threats, such as stop and search procedures, when we consider the responses of those communities that experience these

attempts first-hand. Marginalisation and alienation can result from the perceived imperative to identify security concerns, and the spectre of ‘radicalisation’ can justify practices that provoke precisely the sort of anti-authoritarianism they are designed to contain²³. By worrying, wondering and agonising about security, aggression and hostility can actually be produced: precisely through the practices that ‘suspects’ have to undergo. In the context of security threats and concerns, it appears that searching for something long enough and hard enough can, given the correct conditions, create that which is sought, just as Bigo²⁴ suggests.

This chapter considers a case study that sheds some light upon this self-fulfilling, circular property of security practices. Taking the example of Lunar House in Croydon, the headquarters of the Immigration and Nationality Directorate as a case study, the chapter begins by examining the effects of the negative newspaper coverage that surrounds the site. In line with a long tradition of media speculation, criticism and scrutiny pertaining to Lunar House a number of high profile media scandals occurred during the period of my research at the site between September 2005 and June 2006. Firstly, a senior asylum caseworker was discovered to be abusing his position by offering visas in exchange for sexual favours in January 2006²⁵. Following this, a cleaning firm that was contracted to clean the building was found to be employing asylum seekers illegally, causing national consternation in the printed press²⁶. As these scandals played out in 2006 Lunar House featured in a printed newspaper story on average once every four days, including three stories in *The Mirror*, five in *The Telegraph*, eight in *The Observer*, eleven in *The Mail* and twelve in *The Times*. Security staff, interviewers, caseworkers and managers were each profoundly affected by the demands to which they became subject as a result of these stories. The chapter examines the pressures that such media scrutiny creates among these employees and suggests that the printed media acts as a key driver of anxiety, fear and suspicion of asylum seekers among the workforce.

The chapter goes on to outline the ways in which this atmosphere of heightened anxiety about security at Lunar House impacts upon the work that is carried out there. Following Stuart Hall *et al's* (1978)²⁷ seminal research into the way in which media anxiety can

prompt state institutions into over-reacting about particular social ‘crises’, thereby exacerbating the difficulties that are faced, it is argued that the security practices that are executed on the basis of media concerns actually *produce* conditions and procedures that can be degrading, inappropriate and, ultimately, provocative. Security measures at Lunar House can consequently elicit the very antipathy, despondency and hostility that they are intended to contain. This point is especially apparent with respect to the spatial layout of the building, which serves both as a security device, and as a provocation. It is argued that it is through the treatment of asylum seekers as a security threat that they can become humiliated, alienated and frustrated. We can, therefore, identify the same self-fulfilling and self-actualising nature of fear about security at Lunar House that appears to operate through the relationship between minority communities and stop and search procedures in the UK. It begins in the printed media, translates into uncompromising security procedures and elicits responses from the asylum seekers who use the building in their turn. This is one example of the ‘discourse of unease’ suggested by Bigo (2002) which produces that which it describes, typifying the contradictory and uncomfortable position that modern states occupy between real and imagined threats to national security.

In the next section, the experience of visiting Lunar House is characterised, with particular emphasis on the queuing procedure for which the site has gained notoriety. In the third section, the extraordinary sway that the fear of negative media publicity holds over managers, as well as front-line public servants at Lunar House is examined through a consideration of the experiences of South London Citizens²⁸, a local charity which used the threat of negative media publicity to secure access to carry out an influential analysis of the practices that take place at the site. In the fourth section, the security-justified processes and procedures that are undertaken as a result of the constant threat of negative media publicity are outlined and the provocative character of these policies and procedures are examined.

Experiencing Lunar House: Queues

Lunar House is an imposing, 20-storey office block in the centre of Croydon, a bustling London suburb. Together with Apollo House, a neighbouring tower, it housed in 2005 the Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) of the Home Office (see Figure One²⁹)³⁰.

Figure One: Lunar House



The names of the two towers reference the heady optimism of the ‘space age’, and their grey, austere concrete bulks reflect the architectural style of the late 1960s³¹. Many asylum seekers make their initial claims for asylum in the offices of Lunar House, meaning that this is often the site at which the government first encounters asylum seekers, and asylum seekers first encounter the state. While significant numbers of asylum seekers apply for asylum at air- and sea-ports around the UK, the majority apply for asylum from within the country. In 2006, for example, 3,580 asylum applications were received at ports compared with 20,030 received in-country³². There are only two locations in the UK where asylum seekers can make within-country claims for asylum: at the Asylum Screening Units in Liverpool and Lunar House. While it is not possible to provide an accurate estimate of the number of asylum applications processed at Lunar House in particular (despite a number of parliamentary questions relating to this issue, it is felt that such information could only be collected at ‘disproportionate cost’³³) around

two thousand IND employees worked here in 2005, with another four thousand working elsewhere in the Croydon area³⁴.

The administrative system at Lunar House struggles to accommodate the number of asylum seekers who apply. The facility has become notorious for the lines of bedraggled asylum seekers who cluster outside the gates, a notoriety that owes itself not only to the fact that the constant stream of asylum seekers into the UK is so clearly in evidence here, but also to the fact that Lunar House appears besieged, incapable of reducing the number of people waiting outside. Queues begin to form as early as 5am every day and are divided into two sections. On one side of the building a huge, purpose-built warehouse holds the queue of people routinely renewing visas or passports. This queue often reaches five hours in length. On the other side of the building, hidden from view behind the concrete bulk of the main office, asylum seekers queue separately in semi-covered areas, often for even longer. Doors close at 4pm on weekdays, but there are accounts of asylum seekers still being seen at 9pm and immigration officials themselves being asked to work until midnight in order to clear the backlog³⁵.

The aim of my research at Lunar House was to examine not the ways in which asylum seekers themselves experience unequal relations of power of various kinds (although they clearly do), but the ways in which the workforce, including security guards, asylum caseworkers, interviewers, backroom government employees and immigration system managers are induced to exert power over asylum seekers in ways that lead to their exclusion from national territory³⁶. The focus was, therefore, on the employees who conduct and implement control of the UK's borders, rather than those who experience this control. As such, attention is given to the pressures and influences that these actors are under in order to assess the ways in which they manage unease about 'security'.

In total, thirty-seven interviews were conducted between July 2005 and June 2006 as part of an examination of the security-justified treatment of asylum seekers across the UK, alongside participant observation of two high profile asylum advocacy campaigns and detailed textual analysis of promotional materials, policy documents and media coverage.

My interviews at Lunar House were conducted with national, management level professionals at the IND, union members working at Lunar House, campaigners working to improve the conditions within Lunar House, and users. They were complemented by drawing upon evidence contained within a comprehensive study of the experience of both staff and users, published in 2006 by South London Citizens (SLC), an independent local charity. This charity surveyed over 300 staff and users of Lunar House, and received thirty written submissions to their report³⁷.

The findings of the SLC enquiry highlighted the difficult conditions faced by asylum seekers while they wait. It recorded cold and draughty waiting rooms, a lack of available information (for example on queuing times or immigration procedures), poor provision for families, a lack of available refreshment, poor and inadequate toilet facilities, an incomprehensible complaints process and unsatisfactory fire safety and evacuation procedures³⁸. Given these conditions, the length of queues has become a recurrent embarrassment. They have become both the symptom and expression of a bureaucratic system that is struggling to process the number of applicants it receives.

It is clear from the sea of humanity that descends on Croydon each day that *even 20 storeys of bureaucrats* cannot cope with the workload.

The Observer, 2nd March 2003³⁹

What is more, given the purported association between security and asylum seekers, the queues represent an unwelcome perceived security risk to the management team. When I interviewed a senior manager at Lunar House, these concerns were explicit⁴⁰.

From our point of view, we've got a lot of cost constraints so we don't want to have lots of people waiting - the added security and the added buildings etcetera, etcetera.

Despite government attempts to reduce the queues, waiting times have been persistently lengthy. In 2004, in response to media scrutiny, the layout of the building and the route of the queues were altered in order to promote a faster throughput of asylum seekers and reduce the numbers who were waiting. Interviewers were also given more time away from their desks for breaks, in the hope that they would be able to provide a more 'efficient' service. In an interview in June 2005, however, the then Minister for Immigration was forced to concede that the 'pig pen'-style queues were still there and that the measures designed to ameliorate the long waiting times had not been sufficient⁴¹.

By the time an asylum seeker reaches the head of the queue at Lunar House they may be tired, irritable and frustrated at the treatment they have received, especially if they are under the age of eighteen or traumatised by their experiences in their countries of origin. What awaits them is a difficult interview in which they must give their case for asylum. These testimonies are recorded and will be used as evidence for the determination of their claim, both at appeal and in the event that the asylum seeker be deported. Around 15% of asylum cases are not adjudicated correctly at the first sitting in the UK (and this figure assumes that the second sitting detects all mis-adjudicated cases)⁴². What is more, should an asylum seeker raise the suspicion of caseworkers sufficiently, there are facilities to incarcerate them at Lunar House pending immediate deportation⁴³.

Fear of the Printed Press

Both the queuing process and the eventual asylum interview can, therefore, be fraught, stressful events. Under such conditions, the threat of negative media attention can have powerful effects and can raise levels of anxiety among the management staff as well as among front line employees, such as security guards, interviewers and caseworkers. For example, the legacy of the negative press coverage concerning the offering of visas in exchange for sexual favours and the contracting of illegally employed asylum seekers was to raise anxiety among the management team about the flows of information within Lunar House. A new 'director of communications' was employed, a post that had previously not existed, reflecting the level of concern and exacerbating the tense working

conditions of existing staff. The SLC report also found evidence of the impact of media scrutiny over employees:

Staff are under so much pressure – not just the targets, but keeping on top of the pressure that’s put on them. They’re at the front line of national concern and they have to deal with the psychic [sic] burden.

Personal Testimony, Back, Farrell et al. 2005, p63

Such concerns indicate the seriousness with which national newspaper coverage is taken at Lunar House.

To illustrate the importance of concerns about negative publicity to the way Lunar House operates, the means by which SLC gained access to Lunar House is instructive. The charity was able to harness the *threat* of negative media attention at Lunar House and turn it to their advantage, demonstrating the effect it can have. SLC is a largely voluntary organisation, composed of a diverse collection of churches, unions, schools and other civic organisations. The charity aims to improve the lives of marginalised and disadvantaged groups in the South London area. Although Croydon is part of its geographical remit, however, it set itself a difficult task from the outset with respect to Lunar House, by making it the explicit intention of the charity to expose the dehumanising practices that many asylum seekers experience there. There is no reason to expect that the Lunar House management team, which was also the national-level executive managing committee of the IND at the time of SLC’s enquiry, would be responsive or receptive to these aspirations.

By using media coverage, however, and the threat of media coverage, SLC was able not only to access Lunar House, but also to negotiate the co-operation of the senior management team, to use substantial levels of IND financial resources to meet their objectives, in the form of a management-level IND employee who was appointed to work two days a week in order to carry out SLC’s recommendations, and to alter a range of dehumanising practices at Lunar House, including removal of some of the ‘pig pen’ style

railings, removal of the prohibition of mobile phone use within the building, the introduction of a customer service booth and the re-organisation of interview rooms to ensure greater privacy.

Initially, the relationship between the management team and SLC was nevertheless hostile. SLC chose to distribute tea and coffee from a brightly coloured Winnebago to the asylum seekers who were queuing outside Lunar House on a cold morning. This activity attracted media coverage and served to announce the intentions of the SLC group in loud and obvious terms, with predictably negative reactions from the Lunar House management team. Under constant (now-credible) threat of further publicity, however, the co-operation of the management team was gradually secured. Although the management team would routinely postpone meetings, withhold information, miss deadlines, attempt to cancel appointments and leave very long amounts of time between correspondence, SLC repeatedly made use of the threat of staging another eye-catching public action, such as a parade or distributing more tea and coffee at the front of Lunar House. As one SLC organiser⁴⁴, reflecting upon the process of securing the co-operation of the senior IND management team, explains:

[After the initial distribution of tea and coffee] they were taking us very seriously because they saw what we'd done, we'd got quite a bit of media attention. When we heard from *[senior immigration officials]* 'yes, we'll come to discuss working together on the basis that there is no media' we said 'ok, we agree'. And when they hadn't sent us their response ... we decided that we would stage an action, if only to galvanise the support of the voluntary sector. But having let them know, we then got an immediate response back.

The relationship between SLC and the management team in Lunar House was therefore constructed and sustained precisely through the threat of staging eye-catching, media-attracting 'actions'. This threat unpinned the success of SLC in achieving their stated objectives. Although there are, doubtless, questions about the extent to which SLC have

made a genuine difference at Lunar House⁴⁵, the fact that they were successful at securing the co-operation of the management team points towards the sensitivity of the IND, and the government more generally, to the threat of negative publicity and underscores the pervasive fear of media coverage that runs throughout the organisation. This sensitivity demonstrates the influence the media can exert through the mechanism of framing - selectively representing certain perceived aspects of reality so as to promote particular definitions, interpretations, evaluations and treatments⁴⁶. By harnessing the fear of the media's influence that pervades Lunar House, as well as the sensationalism that the printed press can generate⁴⁷, the management team became remarkably accommodating of SLC's demands.

Circulating Security Concerns

Because there is an association between asylum seekers and terrorism in the printed press, and because the printed press has such a strong influence within Lunar House, as the experience of the SLC team demonstrates, it is no surprise that security at Lunar House is extremely tight. The exterior of the building is patrolled by uniformed security guards. Their job is to police the queues and to crack down on 'asylum agents' who offer illegal employment to the many recently-arrived asylum seekers in the vicinity. All entrants to the building are searched and must remove watches, keys and jewellery in order to pass through airport-style metal detectors upon entering. Entrants' bags are searched and cameras, mobile phones and other electronic equipment are confiscated and stored in locked cabinets at the gates. Only asylum seekers and migrants wanting to renew visas are allowed past the first desk and asylum seekers cannot be accompanied unless they are under eighteen years of age or have documentary evidence to show that they are vulnerable. Security of staff is also taken extremely seriously. When I interviewed members of the Immigration and Nationality Directorate's senior management team, I was accompanied at all times: first by a security guard in the foyer, then by a secretary in the lift until my hand-over to my interviewee on the top floor of the building.

Three specific security procedures appeared to have a significant impact upon the way Lunar House was experienced by my interviewees. Firstly, the chairs that are provided at interview are bolted to the floor so as to prevent them from being used as weapons or projectiles, and no chairs were provided during large parts of the queuing process. Secondly, interviewers are located behind protective plastic screens in order to shield them from personal attack. Thirdly, the entire senior management team is located not in the main offices of Lunar House, but in a separate office five minutes walk away, so as to reduce the security risk to the building as well as to the team. These security measures have implications for the management, users and workforce at Lunar House.

One way in which security policies can inconvenience workers at Lunar House, for example, relates to the experience of senior management. Their physical separation from the main Lunar House building has distinct disadvantages. The SLC report highlighted the difficult position of the senior management team in communicating effectively with front-line staff. Contributors to the report raised concerns that senior management did not understand the needs of front-line staff, or welcome their ideas. With these sorts of perceptions, clear leadership and visible support of caseworkers and interviewers in the main building had become a high priority for the senior management team. The physical distancing between senior management and workers, however, did nothing to meet these objectives. As one of my interviewees outlined⁴⁸, it was more difficult for managers to keep track of the day to day running of the building, including the working atmosphere and the opinions of middle managers, when they were physically separated from it. It was also more difficult for managers to show clear, visible and immediate leadership in the event of disturbances. In a 2004 survey of staff attitudes⁴⁹ the Home Office found that only 13% of the workforce thought that the IND senior management team was in touch with staff. The separation of senior management from staff can only exacerbate these difficulties.

Another effect of these security measures was to provoke the users of Lunar House. One of my interviewees⁵⁰ had accompanied a number of vulnerable asylum seekers to Lunar House. His frustration at the way in which asylum seekers were expected to endure the queuing conditions was evident.

I think it's deliberately making it so difficult that fewer and fewer people will even embark on this process. The whole system is wanting to send a message to the countries of origin 'Britain doesn't want you. We will make it really tough. Don't come here 'cos we do everything we possibly can to push you back'. It's deliberately so that you know that this is going to be really, really tough.

The lack of seating during the waiting period meant that the conditions of queuing became even more arduous. Another one of my interviewees⁵¹ gave the following account.

You had to stand, you weren't allowed to sit in that queue. There were old people, children, all sorts of people, people who had literally just come off the plane, or had come off the back of a lorry: had to stand. There was this pregnant woman next to me, I think she was an African woman, who was I think leaning against something and [an official] came out and he just abused her and told her that she wasn't allowed to lean. It was dreadful. There were pregnant women being herded and being forced to stand around in a way that it's not right for people when they're old and carrying children to be forced to stand in queues, to be treated as though they have no rights at all.

When applicants reached the head of the queue, the fact that chairs were bolted to the floor during the interview procedure, and that interviewers were protected by a plastic screen, also served to aggravate the asylum seekers who were being interviewed. Fixed seats meant that many of them had to lean a long distance forward in order to make their cases for asylum. In this way, the internal layout of the interview room served as a provocation. The protective plastic screen, for example, meant that asylum seekers had to recount their experiences, often involving intimate or disturbing details, in a loud voice in a public room.

When security practices and procedures are themselves provocative a degree of escalation can set in, giving rise to what Furedi (2002) refers to as a 'culture of fear'⁵².

The fact that chairs were fastened into position, and that a protective plastic screen was seen as a necessary measure to protect interviewers, was taken to constitute a strong statement about applicants' characters, leading to resentment and hostility among the users of Lunar House.

[Security policies] create a culture of suspicion which makes asylum seekers feel hostile because they are being treated as though they are not good people⁵³.

For this reason, one interviewee saw a direct link between the security measures taken and the risk of security incidents themselves⁵⁴. He suggested that the protective screen was capable of precipitating aggression among asylum seekers who had been waiting all day to be interviewed.

If you're a member of staff and you've had five people have a go at you in one morning and really get aggressive, you need that screen. But why did those people get aggressive in the first place? Because the screen was there! They couldn't speak properly! The seats are so far away their personal business everybody can hear!

A third effect of the security justified policies and procedures in operation at Lunar House concerns their influence over the front-line workforce in the building, including interviewers, security guards and caseworkers. Security procedures can influence these workers both directly and indirectly, either through their immediate effects upon the workforce or through the reactions that they engender within the asylum seeking population, which impact, in turn, upon the workforce.

Directly, there is evidence that employees are not generally happy in their jobs: 50% of IND workers left within the first two years between 2003 and 2005⁵⁵. While there is some evidence that this might be the result of a stressful working environment (one third of Home Office employees say that they experience stress 'often', 'very often' or 'always' in comparison to under 14% in the UK economy as a whole⁵⁶), the SLC report

also noted that the imperative to enact security procedures can be a source of regret and anxiety to staff.

I feel anxious, frustrated and demotivated ... I am disappointed in myself because I end up acting in an uncaring, unsupportive way when dealing with customers.

Staff Testimony, Back, Farrell et al. 2005, p63⁵⁷

One of my interviewees⁵⁸ detailed the case of a security guard she had met whilst queuing. The security guard had explained that the way he was treating asylum seekers at Lunar House was a source of shame and disappointment to him. These sentiments were so extreme that he was planning to resign from his post the following week in order to pursue work elsewhere. Such introspection hints at the need for a sophisticated understanding of security professionals as individuals who can experience security policies as a constraint or imposition in difficult circumstances.

Indirectly, interviewers can also feel intimidated by the aggression and hostility that security policies can provoke in their interviewees. Another of my research participants⁵⁹ had accompanied a vulnerable asylum seeker to her interview and, after waiting with her for seven hours in uncomfortable queuing conditions, had taken a confrontational approach to the interview and attempted to use the threat of newspaper coverage to secure the co-operation of the interviewer. In response to this approach, the interviewer had obfuscated important information from my research participant, refused to divulge details of the claimant's case or engage in any discussion of the legal situation of the claimant. The interviewer also refused to accept new information about the claimant's case, concealed her own identity badge from both the claimant and my research participant, and attempted to confiscate the attendance receipt the claimant had been given upon arrival⁶⁰.

Aside from confirming the pervasive power of the fear of the printed media within Lunar House, these actions indicate a degree of anxiety on the part of the interviewer. Faced with the frustration and hostility of my research participant, the interviewer had become intimidated and refused to co-operate with the interviewee. In other words, the provocation of the interviewee negatively impacted upon the interviewer herself, producing anxiety about the repercussions of the encounter and a readiness to contravene protocol by withholding information such as her identity. In such ways, security policies at Lunar House can negatively impact upon workers through the provocation of its users. These patterns of heightening anxiety, suspicion and hostility capture the circular, escalating nature of unease about security at Lunar House.

Conclusion

The case of Lunar House is illustrative of a range of negative ramifications of the war on terror. Firstly, as Bigo (2002)⁶¹ has discussed, it is clear from the sensitivity of the management team at Lunar House to media scrutiny that the fear of being accused of lax security procedures, “unease about security” in Bigo’s terms, is at least as powerful as real security concerns themselves in determining policies and procedures at Lunar House. As a result, employees from the managerial staff down to front-line public servants are subject to the often imagined, volatile and exaggerated demands and scrutiny of the printed press. Workers can consequently feel that they must conduct themselves in ways that appear concordant with the imperative to maintain security, which can be detrimental to their own working environments, the work that they carry out, and the asylum seekers who rely upon their services.

Secondly, by implementing policies that are at once preventative and provocative, the security practices at Lunar House illustrate a particular paradox of concern about security: the self-fulfilling and self-actualising quality of security unease. By implementing procedures that treat individuals as potential security threats, such procedures invite hostility and can create precisely the sorts of reactions they are intended to contain. In these ways, security procedures can undermine security itself by alienating

or humiliating those who are subject to them. This effect remains the case regardless of the degree to which actual, extant security threats exist. Indeed, this effect challenges any neat distinction between existing security threats and responses to these threats by highlighting the mutually re-enforcing relationship between them.

The self-actualising quality of security concerns that is in evidence at Lunar House replays on a variety of scales and in a variety of contexts within the logics of the war on terror more broadly. While Lunar House illustrates the micro-level operation of this phenomenon, the alienation of communities is also possible as a result of the policy manifestations of security concerns, as the social ramifications of stop and search ethnic profiling illustrate. Moreover, at the international level, whole countries and cultures can react with suspicion, distrust and violence in response to perceived aggression that is predicated upon the search for terrorists and the eradication of security risks as the unrest in both Afghanistan and Iraq illustrate. In this light, the self-fulfilling potential of unease about security is a phenomenon that characterises, typifies and problematises the war on terror across a wide range of situations.

Thirdly, however, despite this structural and conceptual flaw in the logic of the war on terror, the case of Lunar House also illustrates the circular, escalating quality of unease about security. One of the most worrying aspects of the self-actualising property of security concerns is the fact that, once responses *are* actualised and elicited from those who are treated/produced as suspects, these responses can *then* be taken as confirmatory evidence of the need for security measures in the first instance. This effect can complete the link between imagined security risks and heightened security procedures, introducing the possibility that unease about security progressively diverges from reality. Given the attention that the printed press pays to Lunar House, and the evident power that the media have in shaping the practices that are undertaken there, the potential for unease about security at Lunar House to escalate further in the future is clear. Moreover, in the light of this study, the extent to which the circular escalation of unease about security is reproduced in wider contexts, through the contested relationship between state agencies and media, merits ongoing attention.

¹ Statewatch Analysis, 'UK: Stop and Search: Ethnic Injustice Continues Unabated' *Statewatch Bulletin* 15/1 (2005) pp. 15- 16 at <http://www.statewatch.org/news/2005/apr/uk-stop-and-search-2005.pdf> [accessed 24-3-08].

² Italics added. The police powers granted under the 'Terrorism Act (2000)' are to be used in accordance with the 'Police and Criminal Evidence Act (1984) Code A: Code of Practice for the Exercise by Police Officers of Statutory Powers of Stop and Search' from which the citation is taken (para. 2.25). For a discussion, see D. Moeckli 'Stop and Search Under the Terrorism Act 2000: A Comment on R (Gillan) v Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis' *Modern Law Review* 70 /4 (2007) pp. 659-670.

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- ³⁴ L. Back, B. Farrell, and E. Vandermaas (2005). A Humane Service for Global Citizens, South London Citizens: London. Available at http://www.londoncitizens.org.uk/files/Lunar%20House%20Final_Small.pdf. [accessed 30-3-08]
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- ³⁷ L. Back, B. Farrell and E. Vandermaas (note 33).
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- ⁴⁰ Member of IND senior management team.
- ⁴¹ File on Four (2005). Immigration. Broadcast 21st June 2005 (BBC, ed.): Transcript available from: http://news.bbc.co.uk/nol/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/21_06_05_asylum.pdf [Accessed 10-12-06].
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- ⁴³ HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (2006). Report on the Unannounced Follow-up Inspections of Two Non-residential Short-term Holding Facilities: Lunar House, Croydon and Electric House, Croydon, HM Inspectorate of Prisons: London.
- ⁴⁴ Female, forties, asylum advocate and activist.

⁴⁵ Another SLC volunteer (male, forties) described his frustration at the continuous, circular delegation of responsibility and consistent discourse of inertia and risk-transference that he encountered when dealing with senior IND officials, suggesting that these discursive strategies substituted for blunt unresponsiveness when the management team were forced to engage with the charity. As he explains: “The structures of government themselves seem on the one hand hard and clear cut and on the other hand that hardness seems to evaporate when you touch it. It’s almost as if the language of the government and to some degree of the Home Office itself and the Immigration Service has absorbed so much of the language of its opposition”. For this reason, it is inappropriate to conclude that the work of the SLC charity was unproblematically successful at Lunar House.

⁴⁶ R. Entman, ‘Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm’ *Journal of Communication* (1993) 43 (4) pp. 51-8.

⁴⁷ C. Sparks and J. Tulloch ‘Tabloid Tales: Global Debates Over Media Standards’ (2000) Rowman & Littlefield.

⁴⁸ Member of IND senior management team.

⁴⁹ IND Staff Leavers Survey, quoted in L. Back, B. Farrell, and E. Vandermaas (note 33) p. 67.

⁵⁰ Male, mid-fifties, asylum advocate and activist.

⁵¹ Female, mid-fifties, asylum advocate and activist.

⁵² F. Furedi (note 16).

⁵³ Male, forties, local community spokesperson.

⁵⁴ Male, forties, local community spokesperson.

⁵⁵ IND Staff Leavers Survey 2005, in L. Back, B. Farrell and E. Vandermaas (note 33).

⁵⁶ Home Office Staff Survey 2004, in L. Back, B. Farrell, and E. Vandermaas (2005). A Humane Service for Global Citizens, South London Citizens: London; Health and Safety Executive ‘Psychosocial Working Conditions in Britain in 2007’ in S. Webster P. Buckley and I. Rose (eds.) Health and Safety Executive, Health at Work Group, Statistics Branch (2007) London available at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/pdf/pwc2007.pdf> [accessed 3-3-08].

⁵⁷ L. Back, B. Farrell, and E. Vandermaas (2005). A Humane Service for Global Citizens, South London Citizens: London

⁵⁸ Female, mid fifties, asylum seeker support worker.

⁵⁹ Male, mid-fifties, asylum advocate and activist.

⁶⁰ The attendance receipt constituted the only evidence that the interview had occurred.

⁶¹ Bigo (note 21).