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Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies

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Submission ID	253552622
Article Type	Original Article
Keywords	citizenship, ignorance, immigration, knowledge, race/racialisation, security
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“How can you appeal something you don’t know about?” Enforced ignorance within UK citizenship deprivation cases involving ‘ISIS-associated’ individuals

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Keywords: citizenship, ignorance, immigration, knowledge, race/racialisation, security

Word count: 9,335

Ethics statement

This study received ethical approval from the School of Health and Social Sciences (SHSS) Research Ethics Committee, Leeds Trinity University (approval no. SSHS/2022/01) on 9 March 2022.

“How can you appeal something you don’t know about?” Enforced ignorance within UK citizenship deprivation cases involving ‘ISIS-associated’ individuals

Drawing on empirical insights from NGOs working on statelessness affecting ‘ISIS-associated’ British citizens, I examine how legislative changes following the introduction of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 rework terms of knowledge production enabling citizenship deprivation orders to be made without notice. I advance the concept ‘enforced ignorance’ to capture legalised epistemic injustices facing targeted individuals whereby ignorance of deprivation orders prevents them appealing decisions. Enforced ignorance functions through secrecy, silencing, and uncertainty, comprising racialised epistemic practices that undermine rights and accountability. These dynamic and unstable circuits of un/knowledge involve spatio-temporal-affective control over material-discursive sites of knowledge production. Convergence of racialised citizenship and security measures legitimise deprivation against Muslims as threatening others that can be made stateless without proving citizenship access elsewhere.

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Introduction

In December 2019, a dual British (from birth) and Pakistani woman (R (on the application of D4) (Notice of deprivation of citizenship) v Secretary of State for the Home Department) detained in camp Roj in Syria who had allegedly joined the Islamic State was deprived of her British nationality under the British Nationality Act 1981 on grounds that it would be ‘conducive to the public good’ (Royal Court of Justice, 2022). Notice of the deprivation was

placed on her Home Office file per a 2018 regulation but was not communicated to her at the time. D4 was only informed when her lawyers contacted the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in September 2020 to request assistance with repatriating her and were told by the Home Office in October 2020 (ENS, undated). D4 filed for judicial review, objecting to the domestic regulation concerning notice. The decision was taken on information not made publicly available for national security reasons, meaning D4's right to appeal had to made by the Special Immigration Appeals Commission (SIAC) (Royal Court of Justice, 2022). The Court of Appeal rejected the Secretary of State's appeal against the High Court decision and judged in favour of D4. The D4 case provides a watershed moment in UK legislation concerning deprivation powers and right to give notice and subsequent ability to appeal deprivation orders for individuals detained in Syria hoping to return to the UK that, I argue, relate to racialised politics of knowledge underpinning deprivation decisions.

Since then, introduction of the Nationality and Borders Act in 2022 (NBA) and contentious Clause 9 has instituted new conditions concerning what constitutes notice in deprivation cases. Prabhat (2021) argues former Home Secretary, Priti Patel, purposefully removed notice requirements as a 'direct reaction' to the D4 case. The NBA attracted significant opposition during its passage through Parliament, including from the Joint Committee on Human Rights, UN Refugee Agency and NGOs focused on human rights and statelessness and other political parties (Labour, Liberal Democrats, Scottish National Party) who voted against the bill receiving a second reading in the House of Commons (House of Lords, 2021; also Joint Submission to Human Rights Council, 2022).

Clause 9 proved particularly contentious (Webber, 2022a) in allowing the UK government to deprive British citizens of their citizenship without notice or judicial or parliamentary oversight of a dispensation notice, which undermines right of access to a court

and right to a fair trial (Bingham Centre, 2022). Despite the House of Lords voting for its removal (House of Lords, 2022 sec.41), Clause 9 remained in place, but with certain (subjective) conditions: national security reasons or if not informing is deemed 'otherwise in the public interest' or where information required to serve notice is unavailable or it would 'not be *reasonably practicable* to tell them' (NBA, 2022, sec. 10). Conditions for *un*knowledge are thereby legislated in the security context to facilitate deprivation. Since most deprivation decisions occur when the individual is outside the UK (Webber, 2022a:80), such legislated unknowledge has important implications for their right to appeal. Clause 9 has been retrospectively applied to legalise deprivation decisions previously judged illegal under existing law because notice was filed but not served directly to the deprived individual (Webber, 2022a:77), engendering anxiety and confusion for affected individuals and their families. Citizenship is made 'uncertain' (Fortier, 2021) through intersecting practices of racialisation and securitisation (Abbas, 2024; Tazzioli,2021) that 'unmake' (Kapoor and Narkowicz, 2017) citizens.

Drawing on empirical insights from NGOs working on statelessness affecting 'ISIS-associated' British citizens, I examine how legislative changes following introduction of the NBA 2022 rework terms of knowledge production, enabling citizenship deprivation orders to be made without notice. I advance the concept 'enforced ignorance' to capture legalised epistemic injustices facing targeted individuals whereby ignorance of deprivation orders prevents them appealing decisions. Enforced ignorance functions through secrecy, silencing, and uncertainty, comprising racialised epistemic practices that undermine rights and accountability. These dynamic and unstable circuits of un/knowledge involve spatio-temporal-affective control over material-discursive sites of knowledge production. Convergence of racialised citizenship and security measures legitimise deprivation against

Muslims as threatening others that can be made stateless without proving citizenship access elsewhere. Deprivation orders are usually issued when individuals are abroad, prohibiting them from returning to appeal decisions (Riaz, 2023; HM Courts and Tribunals Service, 2015:12.c). Where the Secretary of State judge disclosure of information to be 'contrary to the public interest' it is excluded from notification served to the appellant meaning they are ignorant of the case against them (HM Courts and Tribunals Service, 2015:4a). Cases are conducted within closed proceedings by the SIAC and can be heard in absentia and without appropriate legal representation which enforces appellant's expulsion. Analyses reveal how exclusions are legislated within law through racialised power relations of un/knowledge characterising enforced ignorance.

I outline key legislative developments that comprise conditions of possibility for enforced ignorance to be institutionalised and legalised. This overview is not exhaustive but identifies central tenets concerning the relationship between national security and secrecy, undermining of legal procedures concerning right to fair trial, lack of judicial oversight and ability to appeal, which findings further elucidate. Section two examines theoretical frameworks that bring together politics of knowledge, citizenship studies and critical security studies and how these are racialised. Section three outlines the critical race methodology. Section four delineates operation of enforced ignorance from empirical findings. I conclude that enforced ignorance comprises legalised practices of un/knowledge facing deprived individuals within a dual legal system experienced by British Muslims.

Legislative context: Secrecy and national security

Legislative changes expanding citizenship deprivation powers have been justified to address terrorism, domestically, and increasingly, concerning ISIS-related terrorism. The UK has gone furthest in applying nationality law against citizens by removing protections against statelessness whilst proclaiming to retain international obligations under Article 8(1) of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness (Mantu, 2018).

Deprivation powers have been criticised for undermining legal process (Tripkovic, 2023). A particular concern is the executive's application of administrative powers to deprive rather than use the criminal justice system with its superior procedural standards of due process and right to a fair trial (Mantu 2018), raising human rights concerns. These oversights are justified by the executive's claim CD is required for national security and threat of ISIS-associated UK citizens. In the UK, CD can be applied without criminal conviction (Mantu, 2018:32), granting the executive extraordinary scope when deciding which behaviours sanction deprivation.

CD powers were extended by the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 introduced following the 2005 London terrorist attacks. A list of 'unacceptable behaviours' instituting grounds for exclusion from the UK were instituted and powers to deprive under Section 40(2) expanded to allow the Secretary of State to deprive where they were satisfied it was 'conducive to the public good' comprising 222 cases between 2010-2023 (House of Commons Library, 2024:5). The majority are thought to be 'Muslim with South Asian, Middle Eastern or North African birth or ancestry, some born in the UK' (IRR, 2022:8).

Deprivation orders can be appealed on two grounds: contesting claims of 'conduciveness to the public good' or showing the order made individuals stateless (Mantu 2014:167). Although the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 introduced right to

appeal, the Secretary of State can claim the decision is based on information that should not be disclosed in the interests of national security (Mantu, 2014:165). As appeals concerning national security are decided by a special court (SIAC), comprising partially secret proceedings, the executive's evidence of terrorist activity is undisclosed to the appellant (Riaz, 2023). Open judgements comprise information not classed sensitive by the executive. Judgements are only clarified in so far as they comprise national security concerns, which impacts transparency of decision-making (Mantu 2014:165). Judicial scrutiny is required to adjudicate if decisions are arbitrary. No judicial review of decision-making or statutory guidance is provided on what constitutes 'conducive to the public good' which hinders appellants from using it as grounds for appeal (Mantu 2018:32).

The main ground for appeal is therefore statelessness. As mentioned, the UK is prohibited from depriving an individual of their nationality if it renders them stateless. CD comprises a racialised security practice (Abbas, 2024; Naqvi, 2022) since it is only applicable to alleged dual nationals who are predominately from racially minoritised backgrounds. The Home Secretary must have 'reasonable grounds' the individual can acquire citizenship elsewhere, but again no criteria exist (Mantu 2018:34) or safeguards provided to ensure the person will not remain stateless, illustrating how enforced ignorance is legislated through engendering knowledge gaps to enforce deprivation orders.

Despite professed guarantees, the UK executive usually deprives citizens whilst they are outside the UK. Return orders prevent individuals from re-entering the UK to petition an appeal in person, meaning deprivation processes are conducted in absentia (Riaz, 2023). These epistemic asymmetries comprise racialised bordering practices as I discuss later. Tripkovic (2023:1354) argues that whilst not knowing the whereabouts of the affected individual may be unavoidable, the state 'deliberately restricts' the citizen's potential to

appeal, enforcing their exclusion. Individuals experience 'legal limbo' (Bolhuis and van Wijk, 2020) through weaponised uncertainty underpinning enforced ignorance as a purposive epistemic violence; a point I return to.

Tripkovic (2023:1354) describes two predominant situations: *de jure denationalisation* 'whereby citizenship is formally revoked' and *de facto denationalisation* 'where the person formally remains a citizen, but is unable to gain access to their state's territory.' Whilst the former comprises rejection, the second allows for reintegration. These two situations, although different in respect to citizenship status, highlight how citizenship is 'uncertain' (Fortier, 2021) and illustrate spatio-temporal-affective ways enforced ignorance operates and is experienced by the targeted individual. These relate to key issues within racialised politics of knowledge production underpinning enforced ignorance concerning relationship between security and secrecy, 'epistemic borderwork' (Davies et al., 2023), knowledge injustices, and ignorance as an enforced denial of knowledge facilitating legalised mechanisms of racialised exclusion that the next section discusses.

Theoretical Context

Secrecy and security

The interdisciplinary field of secrecy studies provides relevant insights concerning 'secrecy as a process' (Tefft, 1980) and a means of information control, silence, knowledge and ignorance (Simmel, 1950:349-51). Shils (1956:26) defines secrecy as the 'compulsory withholding of knowledge, reinforced by the prospect of sanctions for disclosure.' Secrecy is enforced through penalties connected to power relations circumscribing knowledge restrictions. For the deprived person, penalties are imposed upon them *through secrecy* that prohibits them

from appealing deprivation orders or even knowing they exist. An important question is when is secrecy legitimate?

Debate has ensued within work at the intersection of critical security studies and secrecy research (Stampnitzky, 2020) concerning balancing secrecy and security and implications for democracy and government accountability (Maret, 2011). Aftergood (2010:839) argues that consensus prevails on secrecy being justified to protect 'authorized' national security activities. Security sanctions secrecy but the question of how legitimacy judgements are derived remains. Whilst he recognises that reconciling these tensions is an ongoing project, subject to context and public perceptions, a more nuanced interrogation is required concerning *whose* security is being protected, and by counter-point, who is *insecuritised*, and how knowledge on what should be made secret is judged that I argue operates through intersecting practices of racialisation and securitisation (Abbas, 2024; Tazzioli, 2021).

A contingent question is: what is the purpose of secrets? Shils (1956) distinguishes two types of secrets: *functional* protection that are necessary and *symbolic* protection concerning 'maximal loyalty' and paranoid politics. This suggests secrecy can operate beyond its functional usage in an exclusionary capacity against those deemed disloyal to the state, in this case 'ISIS-associated' (British Muslim) citizens. Government secrecy raises problems for democratic values and rights. Arguably, government secrecy is justified in liberal-democratic societies for public safety relating to national security and countering terrorism even where secrecy may impede constitutional rights and personal liberties (Santoro and Kumar, 2025:89). Conversely, government secrecy is 'antithetical to transparency,' raising concerns around 'right to know, citizen participation, administrative oversight, and democracy itself' (Malet, 2011:xi). Knowledge production practices are indelibly connected to rights, as I develop later.

Absence of judicial review and accountability for CD decision-making is a key means through which enforced ignorance is instituted within CD cases. The term 'enforced' highlights harmful overturning of epistemic entitlement to engender ignorance of an individual's circumstances vis-à-vis their citizenship status and relationship to the state. Secrecy risks becoming unrestrained in the absence of public or judicial scrutiny. Crucially, the issue does not concern legality itself since as Santoro and Kumar (2025:93) lament, 'unrestrained secrecy is often legal.' Enforced ignorance captures coercive mechanisms within legal processes, in this case expansion of CD powers within UK immigration legislation, that compel people obey a law or ensure a particular situation happens or is permitted: becoming de facto stateless.

Secrecy-transparency nexus and border violence

Scholars have challenged the secrecy/transparency binary as a mechanism of government control (Maret, 2011). The secrecy and transparency *nexus* produces a 'second world' (Simmel, 1956:330) through institutionalised processes 'that actively conceal information while also creating access' (Maret, 2011:xv). I argue enforced ignorance operates in CD cases through comparable processes such as open and closed judgements within SIAC. Deprived individuals occupy a second world purposefully denied full access to knowledge, and therefore citizenship rights, as a border control mechanism.

Scholarship in (critical) border and migration studies provides useful insights of how knowledge is produced and harnessed to control migrant mobilities. A relevant contribution is Glouftsios's (2024) exploration of how ignorance concerning border violence is enabled through secrecy in the context of Frontex's maritime pushback scandal deployed by state authorities to forcefully remove asylum seekers from EU territory without due process. Glouftsios (2023:727) contributes two key arguments: firstly, secrecy 'takes the form of hiding

and obfuscation.' The former involves withholding information; the latter comprises a more complex 'production of uncertainty, ambiguity and confusion about a policy or practice' (Glouftsios, 2023:727). Secondly, he troubles the binary of secrecy/transparency, arguing that transparency is a mechanism for hiding pushbacks and obfuscating Frontex's accountability for rights violations. Secrecy is therefore an active process that facilitates border violence. Borders are not only produced through knowledge production, but through confusion and silencing accounts that 'expose the injustice of the border itself' (Davies et al. 2023:69). This is useful for understanding how enforced ignorance operates as a bordering mechanism to impose conditions of insecurity and uncertainty onto the deprived individual to prevent them from contesting their deprivation and ultimately from returning.

Glouftsios's study brings together literature exploring the social and political relevance of secrecy as contested and productive within security studies (Stampnitzky, 2020) and underexplored areas of border and migration management (Ghezelbash, 2020). However, it retains an epistemic blind spot observed within security studies and migration studies concerning practices of race and racialisation (Danewid, 2022; de Noronha, 2019). Danewid (2022) addresses critiques concerning absence of racial-colonial violence in literature on the securitisation of migration (Howell and Richter-Montpetit, 2019). These contributions problematise Eurocentrism and 'methodological whiteness' (Bhambra, 2017) or 'epistemic colonialism' (Eriksson Baaz and Verweijen, 2018) of securitisation theory to redress erasures of race, empire and colonialism that reveal colonial developments of contemporary immigration regulations. This corrective is relevant for understanding conditions of possibility of enforced ignorance within CD cases that exploit intersecting practices of racialisation and securitisation in the treatment of British Muslims through convergence of racialised immigration controls and CT legislation (Abbas, 2019, 2024).

Knowledge injustices

Returning to the link between knowledge production and rights, another important line of inquiry for conceptualising enforced ignorance concerns knowledge injustices and their role in demarcating il/legal processes. Santoro and Kumar (2025:89) surmise that 'governmental practices of secrecy threaten the epistemic dimension of rights,' arguing that right entitlements impinge on the largest knowledge available of conditions that may hinder realisation of that right, what they term 'epistemic entitlement' of rights. For deprived individuals, this would encompass full knowledge of their deprivation status and evidence on which decisions are based. Santoro and Kumar (2025:89) concede that secrecy needs to be accommodated in non-ideal situations but should be available for assessment by the right-holder, what they term 'right of assessment,' which imposes a government obligation to justify right restrictions. As I show, such scrutiny practises are not embedded within UK CD decision-making.

Also writing on Frontex 'pushbacks,' Davies et al.'s (2023:169) study uses postcolonial perspectives on 'epistemic violence' (Spivak, 1988) to explore contemporary borders and political geographies of violence to reveal 'uneven politics of knowledge'. Borders are 'sites of epistemic struggle' (Davies et al. 2023:169) which involve epistemic borderwork by state authorities to silence undesirable truth claims. They combine analyses with Fricker's (2007:44) 'testimonial injustice' as exemplifying epistemic harm where 'to be wronged in one's capacity as a knower is to be wronged in a capacity essential to human value' revealing how testimonial exclusion is linked to identity privilege (Fairbairn, 2020; Landström, 2024). Whilst in Fricker's conceptualisation such injustices are errors of judgement due to epistemic failure, this does not address harms of *purposeful* denial of testimony that I argue

characterises enforced ignorance, which requires interrogating ignorance as an epistemic practice.

Ignorance

A related field to secrecy studies is ignorance studies. As with secrecy, Rappert and Balmer (2015:328) observe that 'Ignorance pervades the areas of intelligence, security and national secrets.' Examinations focus on overcoming knowledge gaps whilst concealing what is unknown. My focus is active production of knowledge gaps enforced upon deprived individuals as an effect of power legitimised on security grounds. Like secrecy, Rappert and Balmer (2015:328) argue ignorance 'can become a resource when dealing with defense and security matters,' recognising that knowledge and non-knowledge are co-constitutive for decision-making.

DeNicola (2017:89) explores the relationship between secrecy and ignorance arguing secrecy, unlike privacy, comprises intentional acts to prevent others from knowing, imposing ignorance without belief that what is kept secret is legitimately private and outside public concern. Secrecy is principally about preventing others from knowing things they may have a legitimate interest in knowing. Mechanisms of secrecy used by governments such as withholding or concealing knowledge, abuse power differentials between those who know and those intentionally kept ignorant (DeNicola, 2017:90), comparable to enforced ignorance. The 'fight against terrorism,' Daase and Kessler (2007:430) argue, is 'characterized by the interplay of rather distinct logics and forms of non-knowledge,' that characterises enforced ignorance. This requires moving away from binaries of secrecy/transparency, ignorance/knowledge or what Rappert and Balmer (2015:334) term 'ignorance-as-absence'

versus 'knowledge-as-presence' and between 'ignorance-as-asset' and 'ignorance-as-threat' to delineate how ignorance can be manufactured and utilised as a resource.

Similarly, Sullivan and Tuana's (2007:1) examination of epistemology of ignorance troubles binaries of ignorance/knowledge by bringing together concepts of epistemology, the 'study of how one knows' and ignorance, 'a condition of not knowing' with the intent of delineating different types of ignorance, ways in which they are produced and maintained, and role within knowledge practices. Their contribution is useful since they are not concerned with knowledge gaps arising from oversight that can be easily corrected, but with *active production of unknowledges* for the purposes of domination and exclusion within instances of racial oppression.

Mills's (1997:18) influential *The Racial Contract* provides important insight of racialised ignorance in which the epistemology of ignorance functions as an 'inverted epistemology' underpinning a white supremacist society that racially divides people into sub/human in which white people benefit from racial hierarchies and privileges they fail to recognise. For Mills (2007:16), white ignorance encompasses 'both false belief and the absence of true belief.' I take from Mills (2007:19) the racial asymmetry of knowledge production that safeguards white racial superiority, affecting both white and people of colour, whilst legitimating dehumanising practices against those classified as inferior. In place of misrecognition however, my delineation of enforced ignorance is based on a *knowing subject* that purposefully exploits racialised knowledge practices to not only exclude deprived individuals from the capacity to be producers of knowledge, such as through personal testimony, but from society itself. My conceptualisation aligns with those who recognise the racialised 'strategic' (Bailey, 2007), 'power' (Code, 2007) or 'violent' (Jones, 2021) applications of ignorance that sensitise us to asymmetries between knowledge and ignorance and

importance of epistemic responsibility to justly allocate blame or culpability (Code, 2007:227) that, I argue, is missing in CD cases through mechanisms of enforced ignorance, which this article elucidates.

Methodology

The research adopts a CRT lens which traditionally centralises racialised participants' lived experiences to reveal exclusionary political and legal structures through storytelling or legal narrativism (Crenshaw 1995; Delgado 1995:11). However, it was not possible within the research scope to speak directly to those impacted which highlights how enforced ignorance operates through silencing. NGO actors were cognisant of (racialised) implications of speaking for deprived individuals and demonstrated reflexivity concerning their whiteness in navigating privileged yet nonetheless problematic policy spaces. Accounts revealed racialised structures/practices underpinning deprivation orders impacting British Muslims who are overwhelmingly from racially minoritised communities in keeping with a CRT approach (see Author for a detailed discussion).

Data relates to a 6-month UK Research Innovation (UKRI) project conducted in 2022 exploring impact of CT and related legislation on British Muslim populations and experiences of citizenship. The NBA came into force during fieldwork. The article focuses on 8 participants from 7 NGOs or think tanks specialising in statelessness (Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, ISI), repatriation (Rights and Security International, RSI), policy issues affecting UK Muslim communities (Community Policy Forum) and children's rights (Save the Children, Children's Rights International Network). NGO participants were predominately white British (3 white British females, 2 white British males, 1 white female European, 1 British Middle

Eastern Muslim female, 1 British Asian female). I contacted various government committees such as the Joint Human Rights Committee and MPs but faced similar challenges to NGOs concerning speaking to state officials.

The sample was compiled using snowball sampling. As Noy (2008: 329, original italics) observes, this technique 'partakes in…dynamics of…organic social networks.' Interest convergence is a key principle within CRT for social change by aligning interests with the dominant group. Participants discussed involvement in a 'civil society movement on statelessness' to highlight injustices by incentivising political interest via public support and positive media representation. Most had undertaken research and/or reports in relevant areas and/or had professional qualifications in law or human rights. Whilst organisations were international, focusing on conflict-affected states, most participants had expertise on UK CT law and policy.

Where consented, I use participants' names/role/affiliation but respect differences between individuals' views and organisations in analysis. Professional integrity and organisational reputation were key ethical concerns, particularly since CD is a politicised issue involving marginalised individuals (and their families) who have limited influence, are overwhelmingly from racially minoritised backgrounds, and which NGO actors felt responsibility to safeguard.

Interviews were around 1 hour-1 hour and 45 minutes via Microsoft Teams to mitigate geographical constraints and participants' time-pressures. Along with the information sheet and consent form, I sent questions tailoured to participants' expertise in advance so they could decide whether to participate and prepare, meaning responses were detailed, informed, and an effective use of time. Questions covered key areas whilst allowing flexibility to discuss other avenues. Participants could send links to relevant reports/sources during

interviews. I probed responses and noted aspects to follow up to support validity (Berry, 2003:679). Interviews explored citizenship deprivation and related concerns of civil liberties, human rights and the rule of law and how participants understood these to be racialised. Critical thematic analysis was used combining Braun and Clark's (2006:87) framework of familiarisation, code generation, searching, reviewing, defining, and naming themes with Lawless and Chen's (2019:93) recommendation of 'connecting everyday discourses with larger social and cultural practices nested in unequal power relations.' Analyses revealed important tensions between citizenship rights, the rule of law and CD within the national security context. The next sections delineate how enforced ignorance operates within CD from research findings.

Findings

Legislating ignorance

This section explores the legislative context underpinning conditions of possibility for enforced ignorance. Isobel Ingham-Barrow, CEO of Community Policy Forum, situates the NBA within a parliamentary landscape 'specifically designed to remove safeguards from executive overreach, to remove accountability and remove scrutiny, particularly judicial scrutiny, of government actions' following introduction of a series of bills that collectively undermine democratic safeguards and fundamental civil and human rights (CPF, 2024:2; Liberty 2022). Former human rights barrister, Webber (2022b:26), corroborates that the NBA alongside other key legislative developments, such as the Judicial Review and Courts Act 2022, illustrate how 'in the service of an authoritarian agenda, [the UK government] uses law to undermine the rule of law and executive accountability, and to criminalise marginalised and/or racialised groups' that erode human rights and entrenches government impunity. Important here is the

ability to legally undermine legal principles and protections that enforce racialised exclusions from legal process and redress.

Ingham-Barrow remarks that legislative harms had already been instituted through prior immigration controls, notably section 40(4A) of the BNA 1981, introduced by the Immigration Act 2014 which allows for British citizenship deprivation on conducive grounds 'even if it would render a person stateless' (UK Visas and Immigration, 2024). However, she recognises crucial reworkings of the terms of knowledge under Clause 9 that enable CD orders: '…the…difference now is that it's easier for them to take your citizenship away and *not tell you*.' NGO actors corroborate Prabhat (2021) that Clause 9 was a direct response to the D4 case to 'sanction that earlier misuse of power by the Home Secretary' (Emily Ramsden, then Senior Officer Migration, Citizenship and Belonging programme, RSI), exemplifying a violent bordering mechanism of il/legality. Enforced ignorance operates through purposive failure to inform individuals of their deprivation status, hindering appeals.

Enforced ignorance comprises a legalised practice of un/knowledge through spatio-temporal control, as Ottomine Spearman, Research Officer, ISI, describes:

> …the D4 case didn't really go [the UK government's] way. So, they…just changed the law to make it legal and make it legal retroactively. The Home Secretary has complete discretion to deprive someone of their nationality. There is no judicial oversight. If they're deprived while abroad, they might not even know about it and now, that's legal... Then, they can't come home to challenge the decision…I mean, what does that …say for the rule of law and democracy in the UK?

Cases which previously did not meet the threshold for giving notice are retrospectively applied (Webber, 2022a:77). Deprivation orders are usually issued when individuals are

abroad, prohibiting them from returning to the UK to appeal or even knowing it exists (Joint Submission of Human Rights Council, 2022: sec.47). Enforced ignorance is comparable to Davies et al.'s (2023) elucidation of 'epistemic borderwork' used by states to silence undesired voices to hinder appellant's capacity to make their mistreatment visible. The account highlights epistemic struggles involved in enforcing and appealing violent border practices through dismissing relevant testimony which troubles boundaries of il/legality and demonstrates the importance of knowledge practices to racialised border regimes.

Enforced ignorance enables legal principles and democratic values to be undermined through deprivation powers from within a racialised system that legalises such exclusions, comparable to Garner's (2007:14) articulation of whiteness as 'an unchecked and untrammelled authority to exert its will; the power to invent and change the rules and transgress them with impunity.' British Muslims can be excluded from the legal and political community ('they can't come home to challenge'), whilst protecting the normative white corpus of the nation, illustrating the dual legal system underpinning a racialised hierarchy of citizenship rights (Abbas, 2024, 2021, 2019; Naqvi 2022). The Home Secretary is afforded extensive powers to deprive without judicial oversight. This situation is comparable to Santaro and Kumar's (2025:93) depiction of 'unrestrained secrecy' whereby 'the issue is not of legality' since it is 'often legal,' but of preventing citizens and oversight agencies accessing information needed to exercise public supervision, inviting Spearman's question: 'what does that…say for the rule of law and democracy in the UK?'

NGO actors raised concern that legislated changes concerning right to be notified impact right to appeal. Although the NBA safeguards appeal rights (Webber, 2022a:78), as Spearman questions: 'how can you appeal something if you don't know about it?' Enforced ignorance produces a Kafkaesque situation for deprived individuals resulting from two interconnected

discursive-material enforced absences: firstly, knowledge of the deprivation decision; secondly, exclusion from the appeal process. Failure to be notified means affected individuals, as Caia Vlieks, Research and Education Officer, ISI, reports, are 'left unable to provide arguments and evidence in defence of their case.' Enforced ignorance engenders epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007) or 'epistemic violence' (Spivak, 1988) through disregarding knowledge possessed by the deprived person (Dotson, 2011:236). Most deprived individuals have a right of appeal to First-tier Tribunal (FTT), but this is restricted where the Secretary of State argues information on which decisions are based should not be publicly available for security reasons, international relations or public interest (Riaz, 2023:1524). Subsequent forms of violence are engendered through control over sites of knowledge production that undermine legal process, as Vlieks explains:

> Trials will occur in absentia and it's just completely contrary to principles of open justice, natural justice, rule of law, procedural safeguard, etcetera.

The epistemic harm in effect is 'testimonial injustice' (Fricker, 2007). For Fricker, this involves denying credibility of an epistemic subject due to identity prejudice that, I argue, is underpinned by racialised politics of knowledge production premised on dominant framings of sub/human, terror/ist (Abbas, 2021) that safeguard white privileges within law (Harris, 1993). Altanian and Baghramian (2021:433-4) contend that testifiers hold an ethical and epistemically significant position as knower that is only discernible 'against the background of what it means to live a flourishing human life.' Testimony is a form of epistemic involvement that enables 'human value' (Fricker 2007:44). Removal of the deprived person as epistemic agent means they are denied capacity as citizens, as humans, exhibiting a breaching of justice,

the rule of law and access to legal safeguards comprising 'testimonial betrayal' (Wanderer, 2017), which insecuritises deprived individuals:

> By the time you are notified…there may be crucial evidence that was lost due to the passage of time. Or the individual themselves may be in a much more…dangerous situation not able to…challenge their deprivation of citizenship. (Ramsden).

Ramsden highlights temporal dislocations ensuing from failure to give notice relating to legality and insecurity issues affecting the appellant. A key concern is the time-lapse between when the order is made and when the appellant knows it exists which impacts their ability to appeal. Removal of the suspensive right of appeal introduced in the Asylum and Immigration Act 2004 (Joint Submission to Human Rights Council, 2022 sec.29) further demonstrates how enforced ignorance comprises control over spatio-temporal dimensions that detrimentally impacts deprived individuals. Evidence may no longer be available to support appellant's testimony, illustrating how un/knowledge circulates through contested and unstable dynamics of absence/presence. This requires troubling binaries of secrecy/transparency, ignorance/knowledge to account for how ignorance functions as a resource following Rappert and Balmer's (2015:334) delineation of 'ignorance-as-asset' (for state actors) and 'ignorance-as-threat' (for deprived individuals). Epistemic harm of testimonial injustice induces further harms arising from appellant's 'dangerous' situation within camps; a weaponised uncertainty I discuss later.

Expediency with which deprivation decisions are taken differs markedly from the 'slow movement' Abbas (2024:10) documents concerning repatriation decision-making where women and children are left to languish in detention camps in Syria, further exemplifying

racialised hierarchies of belonging. Security sanctions conditions for not giving notice whilst disregarding conditions of insecurity experienced by the appellant, locatable within important debates concerning the security/secrecy nexus and implications for democratic accountability and citizenship rights.

Security and secrecy: (In)securitising rights

NGOs reported concerns that national security is prioritised at the expense of legal process and human rights. Enforced ignorance is instituted via secret or closed proceedings which circumvent judicial oversight and prevent affected individuals from knowing the case against them and thereby appealing decisions, legitimised on national security grounds:

> …the government may have more evidence as to what these people are suspected to have done…one of the real challenges for ensuring…there's sufficient oversight of national security policies is that there are real barriers for courts for overseeing these measures because of closed-material procedures whereby individuals who are being affected by national security measures don't see the case against them and can't challenge the case against them. That all happens in secret courts… to which they don't have access. (Ramsden).

> There are so many murky issues here and it's also very hard to find out about the cases as well because the information can't be disclosed, in the interests of national security…that is the reason…why these are held in secret or in closed proceedings…it's again, national security trumping everything else. (Spearman).

Deprivation cases operate through a complex secrecy/transparency nexus ('*murky* issues') that obfuscate what knowledge the government holds (Glouftsios, 2024). Decisions are taken

in accordance with what individuals are '*suspected* to have done' rather than proof. Fricker (2007) contends that testimonial injustice operates through 'identity prejudice' arising from epistemic error. Conversely, I argue a *knowing* violent, racialised knowledge practice is in operation. Enforced ignorance works in conjunction with what Abbas (2021:304) describes elsewhere as 'premediated ignorance' in the context of pre-emptive CT measures to capture 'active construction of ignorance as a means through which to exercise power within law.' Knowledge practices mobilise prejudices underpinning the religio-racialised profile of the terror suspect as Muslim to legitimise a dual criminal justice system whereby Muslims are subjected to CT measures pre-emptively in the absence of a crime on national security grounds.

Legitimised security sanctions exclude appellants from sites of knowledge production (discursive and material) enforcing an epistemic bind whereby they 'don't see the case against them' so 'can't challenge the case against them', thus hindering appeals. Government secrecy maintains epistemic privilege above appellant's epistemic rights since 'national security trump[s] everything else.' As Santoro and Kumar (2025:89) argue, government secrecy impinges 'epistemic entitlement' of rights. These can be somewhat protected where 'right of assessment' (Santoro and Kumar, 2025:89) is available for governments to explain rights restrictions. Here, security measures create 'barriers for courts' to conduct accountability procedures, supporting concerns discussed earlier that the rule of law and executive accountability is breached in CD cases (Webber, 2022a; CPF, 2024; Liberty 2022). Closed proceedings comprise a secret, 'second world' (Simmel, 1956:330) in conjunction with silencing mechanisms that hinder effective legal counsel ('they can't communicate with their lawyer').

NGOs discussed the problematic role of Special Advocates who defend the appellant in closed proceedings. A SA is a 'specially appointed lawyer…who is instructed to represent a person's interests in relation to material that is kept secret from that person (and his ordinary lawyers) but analysed by a court or equivalent body at an adversarial hearing held in private' (PACAC, 2005). SAs have epistemic privileges vis-à-vis appellants, able to go 'behind the curtain of secrecy' but also experience 'considerable disadvantages' (PACAC, 2005). Complex practices of un/knowledge involving open/closed material constitute an asymmetric secrecy/transparency nexus.

SAs receive open materials comprising relevant classification (e.g. individual's presence is not conducive to the public good), open statements (usually redacted accounts of closed statements) and open documents (PACAC, 2005). However, classified material is not known to SAs, meaning they cannot communicate facts, defences, explanations or evidence the appellant may wish to highlight, or incriminatory material used within the closed case. SAs are thus prohibited from effectively defending their appellant, as Spearman recounts: 'they find it very hard to defend their appellant because *of not knowing* or not being able to communicate with the lawyer. And the lawyer *not being able to know* the facts of the case.' Whilst ostensibly appellants have legal counsel, SAs obfuscate lack of representation appellants receive in practice which undermines legal rights and accountability for decisions.

Relational circuits of unknowledge are unequally distributed comprising different harm implications. A key distinction between the role of ordinary lawyers and SA concerns client responsibility. Spearman observes '[SAs are] *not responsible to the person* whose interests they're appointed to represent;' a situation she deemed 'extremely worrying.' SAs take instruction from a lawyer from the Treasury Solicitor's Department, not the appellant. Through their involvement in closed court proceedings, SAs are made complicit in disregarding

legal principles of open justice. SAs do not have powers to disrupt circuits of unknowledge as Ramsden surmises: '[SAs cannot] ameliorate the harms and the step away from fundamental principles of open justice that are occasioned by closed-material procedures,' which SAs have 'voiced concern' over (see McCullough KC, 2023), but unlike the appellant, they are not directly harmed by such unknowledges (except with respect to professional/personal ethics).

Weaponised uncertainty

So far, I have shown how enforced ignorance operates through mechanisms of secrecy and silencing within national security involving control over spatio-temporal sites of knowledge production. This section explores how uncertainty functions as an effect of power in de-citizenisation processes. Scholars have discussed how politics of knowledge production operate as violent bordering mechanisms (Davies et al. 2023). What is missing from these analyses is how they mobilise racialised hierarchies of citizenship (Danewid, 2021; de Noronha, 2019):

> …the concerns…we've really had around citizenship stripping have been that…on its face it formally could apply to anybody. But really, when you look more closely at the legislation and you look at the international standards that are applicable, citizenship stripping is only going to be used against dual nationals or people the government claims may be eligible for a second citizenship…it disproportionately targets people from racial and ethnic minority groups. (Ramsden).

> …the Home Secretary, in assessing statelessness, only has to have…reasonable grounds that they can acquire another citizenship…*it's not that they have another citizenship*. It's that *they believe that they might be able to* acquire it. (Spearman).

Ramsden articulates how CD powers operate through obfuscating their racialised application, noting that 'formally' they are inclusive but in practice they only apply to dual heritage citizens who are predominately racially minoritised individuals. Fortier (2021:1) conceptualises citizenship as 'uncertain' arising from volatile borders which are 'forever revised, amended and deferred.' Importantly, it is not that individuals have citizenship access, only that the Home Secretary can *claim* eligibility (whereby feigned ignorance is deployed as a resource), comprising weaponised uncertainty. Enforced ignorance operates through a complex absence/presence at the border of il/legality (Davies et al. 2023) that enables statelessness in the absence of state recognition whilst refuting the presence of statelessness. The UK government ostensibly upholds international obligations of not making individuals stateless whilst failing to offer protections available to normative citizens, undermining human rights:

> On a human rights analysis, it's really…important that people know about decisions that are affecting really fundamental rights. It doesn't…seem…sufficient to say, "Oh, well, we just couldn't find this person"…That should be a…strong reason not to take a decision that would affect them so drastically. (Ramsden).

Enforced ignorance is a dehumanising mechanism that benefits from absence of the knowing subject (epistemically and materially) as a means through which the subject is 'unmade' (Kapoor and Narkowicz, 2017) as a citizen. State harms are knowingly legislated without accountability, comprising asymmetric racialised power relations of un/knowledge to exclude individuals from the nation: 'we just couldn't find this person.' Ramsden raises concern that in the absence of procedural safeguards to prove all reasonable steps have been taken to look for individuals, the Home Office may work less hard to notify them, enforcing ignorance of their deprivation. The ENS (undated:1) corroborate Ramsden, noting clause 9 has 'severe

impacts on the rule of law and on a person's fundamental rights' and 'disregards many of the UK's international obligations' concerning responsibility to avoid statelessness, right to a fair hearing and prohibiting arbitrary deprivation of nationality which further discriminates against racially minoritised communities.

Orlaith Minogue, then Senior Conflict and Humanitarian Advocacy Adviser, Save the Children, tells me most women who have been deprived are appealing the UK government's decision, but it is a 'multilayer process,' highlighting how obfuscation surrounding CD policy prolongs their detainment in unsafe camp conditions:

> [Women in the camps] are hugely uninformed and confused…about their legal situation…the position of their government viz-à-viz them and their futures…the citizenship stripping element was definitely a big part of that…it was…wrapped up in a ball of confusion.

The situation facing deprived women reflects Glouftsios's (2024:727) articulation of secrecy as 'obfuscation,' involving 'the production of uncertainty, ambiguity and confusion about a policy or practice.' Here, deprived women are purposively kept ignorant about their citizenship status: 'wrapped up in a *ball of confusion*.' Enforced ignorance operates as an effect of power through spatio-temporal-affective dimensions, keeping targeted individuals out of the UK in a state (geographically and emotionally) of uncertainty which absolves the UK government from taking responsibility without formally severing ties. Enforced ignorance comprises relational circuits of un/knowledge that are dynamic and unstable which not only harms the targeted individual, but their families, including children who risk intergenerational statelessness (Abbas, 2024:11), as Minogue continues:

> …the idea that there is…a clear chain of communication and that they understand what is happening to them or…understood whether or not they were still citizens and what that meant for their children.

Communication between women detained in camps and their families is complex and connections may no longer be present. Minogue explains that 'none of these women have received direct communications from the British government' and are denied consular support, keeping them in a state of ignorance regarding their citizenship status. She describes emotional distress experienced by deprived women through enforced ignorance as a legitimised knowledge practice:

> …[CD] is a hugely confusing and distressing topic for these women who are really deprived of a lot of information about their own legal situation…it is…disappointing to see what we see…or what I have experienced to be…really negative practice when it comes to people's lives, to just see that legitimised…is really upsetting.

Enforced ignorance involves purposively depriving individuals of knowledge regarding their legal status. Women experience epistemic injustice through exclusion from legal knowledge and denial of agency to challenge their citizenship status. Minogue's account reveals relational spatio-temporal-affective dimensions of enforced ignorance engendering a 'contingency of pain' (Ahmed, 2004:20-41) for those advocating on behalf of deprived individuals. Emotional distress is differentially experienced however according to different positions within racialised politics of knowledge. Harms are 'legitimised' through legislative changes that extend CD powers, meaning NGO actors also experience restrictions to contest 'negative' knowledge practices; an inexorable situation she deems 'really upsetting.' Yet

Minogue occupies the position of witness ('to see what we see') who is not directly impacted; her normative whiteness protects her from ever experiencing statelessness.

Conclusion

The article contributes important empirical insights from key NGOs working on CD and human rights affecting British Muslim populations. Although accounts do not offer first hand experiences, they reveal political and legal challenges affecting deprived individuals involving convergence of immigration and CT measures (Abbas, 2024, 2019). NGO actors discussed barriers to advocate for deprived individuals and address harms of statelessness, raising important implications for the rule of law, democratic values, and judicial oversight amid a broader UK legislative context of restrictions to civil liberties and human rights (Webber, 2022b).

I advanced the concept 'enforced ignorance' to explore racialised power relations of un/knowledge within CD cases that address epistemic blind spots in security studies and migration studies (Danewid, 2021) by exploring how intersecting racialisation of citizenship and racialised security practices (Abbas, 2024; Tazzioli, 2021) enable British Muslims to be deprived where judged 'not conducive to the public good' without having to prove citizenship elsewhere. Legislative changes relating to Clause 9 of the NBA concerning giving notice of CD rework boundaries of il/legality. Decisions previously deemed illegal are legalised, revealing arbitrary ways in which CD can be weaponised, undermining the rule of law. Enforced ignorance involves epistemic injustices, principally 'testimonial injustice' (Fricker, 2007), resulting from individuals not knowing the case against them or even being aware of deprivation orders and subsequently unable to challenge decisions. Such injustices are not resolvable through addressing epistemic error. Rather, enforced ignorance mobilises

racialised prejudices via purposive epistemic absences to engender legalised exclusions from legal process.

Enforced ignorance facilitates harmful racialised bordering practices through control over spatio-temporal domains and material-discursive sites of knowledge production involving mechanisms of secrecy, silencing and uncertainty that comprise relational circuits of unknowledge. Since deprivation orders usually occur when individuals are abroad, they are unable to return to the UK to appeal decisions. Cases are undertaken in absentia and may involve long time delays between when orders were made and when appeals are heard at the SIAC (Riaz's, 2023:1517) that affects what evidence may be available and prolongs detainment within unstable camp conditions.

As an asymmetric epistemic practice, enforced ignorance operates through secrecy as obfuscation (Glouftsios, 2024) whereby policy concerning CD weaponises uncertainty and confusion as mechanisms of power. Rather than epistemic errors or gaps being redressed, they are purposively exploited to enforce exclusion. Deprived individuals occupy a state of uncertainty vis-à-vis their citizenship status whilst the UK government can appear to be upholding international obligations of not making citizens stateless.

Alongside secrecy and uncertainty, enforced ignorance functions through silencing. Communications between deprived individuals and SAs are restricted. SAs provide a semblance of legal representation whilst in practice are prevented from providing the appellant effective legal support. They are co-opted into a secret world where, in the absence of judicial oversight of closed court proceedings, 'unrestrained secrecy' (Santoro and Kumar, 2025:93) undermines rights and legitimates state harms being enforced upon deprived individuals, legitimised as security measures.

Accounts support concerns that procedural safeguards for ensuring legality, proportionality and accountability are absent in CD decision-making, with serious implications for human rights (Tripkovic, 2023) affecting not just deprived individuals, but their children, family members in the UK and wider community. Citizenship is experienced as a privilege not a right (Webber, 2022a) for British Muslims. NGOs and think tanks strongly opposed the use of CD as a CT measure, arguing that it is not an effective security measure; a position also upheld by CT professionals (Author, forthcoming). Requirements should be introduced that an independent court or tribunal signs off before a deprivation order takes effect to ensure conditions of necessity and proportionality are maintained. Currently, CD can occur without conviction or a fair trial (Riaz, 2023), which undermines procedural rights. At a minimum, procedural safeguards should be introduced (ISI, 2020) to ensure individuals are aware of deprivation orders, the reason for orders, can access appropriate legal representation and fully participate in appeals to ensure due process is upheld.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Research England Policy Support Fund (PSF).

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