Robert Anderson's pioneering exploration of martial law and censorship on a comparative basis needs to be supplemented with the case of ethnically divided societies where the repression is mainly directed against ethnic outsiders. Of the four case studies in this collection, Poland and Chile are culturally homogeneous societies while the plural states of India and Bangladesh are sufficiently integrated not to make one ethnic group alone the target of state action.

Furthermore, the efficiency and sophistication of ideological social control depends not only on the literacy rate of the population but much more on the level of industrialization. The need and pervasiveness of media manipulation correlates with the country's rate of capital accumulation, standards of consumerism and role in the global political economy.

The two cases under consideration in this brief commentary, South Africa and Israel, are obviously high on the scale of "modernization". Equally significant is their international importance for a variety of reasons. Their methods of political policing are therefore ambiguous on the democratic-military dimension of classification. Unique is their common ethnic dichotomy, the ideology of their ruling groups as chosen but beleaguered people with a subsequent resolve to defend ethnically exclusive power and privileges. Both states are not colonial outposts, of alien settlers, as frequently portrayed, but sovereign entities, dependent to different degrees on outside economic support and international legitimacy.

South Africa and Israel are democratic states in the self-definition of their rulers and in the political practice of the dominant sector. In the eyes of most South African blacks and Palestinians, however, their governments constitute illegitimate regimes. In both states, the military and police exercise a pervasive influence on an essentially civilian government in an expanding executive state. The civilian-military distinction, however, becomes less important in those divided garrison states with widespread siege mentalities. Security considerations override civil liberties in a permanent state of emergency, whether formally declared, as in South Africa, or hidden behind "administrative detentions" and military administration, as on the West Bank and in Gaza since 1967.
Restrictions on the freedom of speech and censorship of the media reflect the social and political dichotomy of ethnic states. Such polities explicitly understand themselves as homes for one ethnic group only. The official symbols and identity of the state from the national anthem to monuments, rituals and official holidays exclude outsiders with a different religion or racial appearance. They are de facto, if not de jure, second-class citizens. Every Jewish person anywhere in the world can gain Israeli citizenship instantly upon emigration. No Palestinian who has been born in Israel but had been driven out during its turbulent history is allowed to return, regardless of his or her political record. The 73 percent South Africans of African descent do not even possess voting rights for the central government. Hence, emergency legislation that in theory applies equally to all citizens has a different meaning for those who dominate and whom it tries to protect and those whom it is trying to control. Martial law is primarily directed against the discriminated, including their few allies within the dominant group.

This ethnic dichotomy explains the paradox of a relatively free and active public discourse among the dominant section, particularly in Israel, but tight censorship applied to the subordinate population. The ethnic state does not expect their consent but merely their acquiescence. Compliance without consent is all the rulers can achieve since the excluded, by definition, cannot identify with the ethnically different superordinates. Only a genuine deracialization in South Africa and secularization in Israel - the official recognition of a common society with equal individual rights - would make these states legitimate homes for all their citizens and remove the need to suppress ideological resistance with censorship.

In the meantime, tolerance for dissent among the rulers contrasts with repression of militant resistance by the dominated. However, there is more to the application of social control in South Africa and Israel. While generally aimed at depoliticising the subordinates, the authorities cannot prevent the information and politicisation of the ruled by the very debates among the rulers how best to suppress their challengers. After all, the underdogs can freely buy and read the papers of their overlords or switch television channels. Therefore, it must seem odd that the same picture or story can be published in a paper mainly read by dominant group members but is forbidden in an outlet aimed at the subordinates. The suppression of opposition organs catering mainly for blacks or Palestinians aims above all at a symbol. It is not so much what they write but what they stand for that annoys the authorities. Against the official claim to control, the opposition voices symbolize defiance.

The shrill propaganda of the alternative voices, however, proves hardly persuasive. In any case, the stark reality often surpasses the stereotypical portrayal of atrocities. The subordinates do not need to read about their oppression in order to be conscientized, as the missionary zeal of "peoples journalism" would like to claim. Thus, restrictions are not imposed out of fear of an unpleasant message that would sway wavering masses. Restrictions are mainly enacted because the rulers themselves
want to believe in their own illusions. The screaming headlines of official failure are a thorn in the flesh of authoritarian omnipotence. The press of the oppressed disproves the fantasy that the objects of administration are grateful for the official benevolence. In the face of a hostile media, bought by thousands, the authorities can no longer claim that the revolt is instigated by a few agitators. As has often been said, in order to suppress an unpleasant message, the messenger is being silenced.

In South Africa, and even more so in Israel, official "news management" is equally concerned with the image of the country abroad. In particular, Israel's vulnerability lies in a changing perception of its "special status" which translates into heavy financial assistance from the diaspora. Therefore, restrictions of foreign correspondents, particularly TV crews, range high on the agenda of both Pretoria and Jerusalem. On the other hand, international legitimacy depends on being perceived as a democratic state which forced both South Africa and Israel to make concessions under foreign pressure. South Africa withdrew an impending law to license all journalists and so far did not go ahead with a threatened ban of some opposition papers, such as the Weekly Mail or the left-radical journal Work in Progress. Both governments need the collaboration of their domestic in-group opposition, in South Africa particularly the English business community. This silent alliance in existential matters, such as thwarting sanctions and guaranteeing economic growth, would be ruptured by too heavy-handed measures against what is officially deemed "legitimate dissent". Emergency legislation, however, is ruthlessly applied against all organised attempts to affect the morale of the ruling group and find allies for the cause of the outsiders. South Africa, for example, will tolerate criticism of Apartheid ideology or ridicule of government but not an "End Conscription Campaign" which mobilizes against compulsory military service and makes common cause with the non-racial vision of the ANC and its internal offshoot, the United Democratic Front.

Despite the outlined common features of the two ethnic states, the different goals of their differently situated outsiders correspond with different state strategies. In Israel, the Palestinians want out, in South Africa the blacks want in. In Israel only 10 per cent of the labor force consists of Palestinians; the modern South African economy depends entirely on black labor and productivity. This imposes limits to ruthlessness on Pretoria, particularly in dealing with politicised black unions which do not exist to the same extent among the much more stratified Palestinian society with an intact communal economy and a strong middle class.

The South African and the Israeli government apply opposing strategies to secure their continued dominance. Pretoria tries to enlarge its base of support by attempting to co-opt sections of its opposition on its terms. Israel systematically excludes its opponents by removing them from any political discourse. In turn, the strategies of the ANC and PLO are shaped by this state tactic: the ANC aims at preventing co-optation through boycotts and the politics of refusal; the PLO, in contrast, must alter the worldwide stereotype of itself as anti-Jewish and savage terrorists. The uprising, in which
heavily armed soldiers shoot stone throwing youngsters, shrewdly reverted this image. Israel, which portrayed itself as always on the defence is now increasingly seen as the aggressor. Since Israel’s financial support in the diaspora depends on the perception of a threat to Israel, the reversal of roles has touched its Achilles heel.

Censorship and news manipulation aims at defining the ruling discourse in this contest. Hegemonic ideologies provide the conceptual master-frame for interpreting intense conflicts. Whose ideological definition will prevail at the end will determine the outcome of the competition, regardless of military might. That, in essence, represents the ultimate victory of communication over naked force. An illegitimate regime is not necessarily an unstable one and prone to revolution. But the rising costs of increasing illegitimacy ultimately overwhelm authoritarian regimes, unless they liberalize well in advance. By censoring news about protests and grievances, authoritarian regimes fail to educate their own constituencies about the necessity of reform. Oblivious to their opponents, and increasingly intransigent through ignorance, authoritarian governments foster polarization. Thus, the short-term, successful repression of an impending challenge contributes to the long-term downfall of undemocratic regimes.