

British Critique on American Media

By B Kumaravadivelu, *Medium*, January 5th, 2024

The Economist, a world renowned British weekly, prides itself as “independent journalism for independent thinking” promising “fair-minded, fact-checked coverage” in order to broaden its readers’ outlook.

5 Just before Christmas, the magazine sought to broaden its readers’ outlook about the American media. In an unusual move, it offered a package of stories written by its staff writers on different aspects of American journalism, concluding that it “urgently needs renewal.”

Focusing on next year’s U.S. presidential election, the writers have presented two related judgements. First, American journalism “lets down readers and voters.”

10 A forceful argument in support of that judgement comes from James Bennet, a former editorial-page editor of *The New York Times* who is now a columnist for *The Economist*.

[...]Here are some of his critical remarks: American journalists “had forfeited what had always been most valuable about their work: their credibility as arbiters of truth and brokers of ideas, which for more than a century, despite all of journalism’s flaws and failures, had
15 been a bulwark of how Americans govern themselves.”

In an environment of ideologically-skewed group-think, American media publish views about America that does not really exist. American media serve its readers with a very restricted range of views failing to equip them with information necessary to form their own judgements so that they can act as responsible citizens. More importantly, American media
20 dumb down their readers exhibiting very little trust in the intelligence and decency of Americans.

The second judgement is part of a data-oriented analysis from another writer. In a way it explains the first: American media have become so ideologically-skewed that they often speak “to their own camps,” that is, preaching to the choir. In doing so, they reveal
25 their partisan approach — either Democratic or Republican — to news collection and news dissemination. Liberal media such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* as well as *CNN*, conservative media such as *American Spectator* and *National Review* as well as *The Fox News Channel* all use biased language and terminology that appeal only to their ardent supporters and so fail to persuade others. Liberal media disproportionately use terms from
30 the Democratic party while the conservative outlets disproportionately use terms from the Republican party. Their language use, for instance, can be easily and reliably distinguished between Democratic and Republican talking points, such as “unborn baby” versus “reproductive care” or “illegal alien” versus “undocumented immigrant.”

No objective observer of American media outlets will disagree with the analysis provided
35 by *The Economist*. At the same time, any objective observer of British media can confidently point out that what *The Economist* says about the American media applies equally to the British media as well. [...]What The Economist has done is a typical case of the pot calling the kettle black. The pot-kettle unease, however, does not in any way diminish the validity of their criticism of the deplorable state of American media. [...]