

# The New Criterion

## The Media

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### The mystification of change

by [James Bowman](#)

On the media's game of good and evil.

As an example of media obtuseness, the emphatic adversatives in the *New York Times*'s headline to Fox Butterfield's classic story of 1997—"Crime Rates are Falling, but Prisons Keep on Filling: More Inmates, Despite Slight Drop in Crime"—take some beating. The *Times* itself tried to top it six years later with a variation on the same theme as Mr. Butterfield resumed his sleuthing to probe the mystery of the "researchers" who had made the "surprising" discovery of a 2.6 percent annual increase in the prison population while, at the same time, "serious crime had fallen."

Since then, those same clueless researchers must have turned their attention to foreign attitudes towards America, as they have produced a new contender for Mr. Butterfield's crown—also, naturally enough, from one of his colleagues at the newspaper of record. On the first ...

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